PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
1 March—12 March 1993

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES VOLUME 220

FOURTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 1 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

EC Butter and Beef

1. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to change the method of distribution of EC butter and beef in 1994 in Clwyd and Wales.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): May I start, Madam Speaker, by wishing you, on behalf of everyone here, a happy St. David's day.

The arrangements for the European surplus food scheme in the United Kingdom are being reviewed and any alterations to the arrangements will be announced at the end of the review.

Mr. Martyn Jones: I am glad to hear that from the Minister, because he will know that in my constituency, people in parts of Glyndwr, which is not distributing food, receive food via their community council. Many people live close to Wrexham council areas, where people automatically receive food via the district council. That is utterly unfair. I hope that the review will have the result that everyone who is entitled to EC surplus food will receive it.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman says. There is a differing degree of coverage throughout Wales. Taking the example of one part of my constituency, one individual—Councillor Victor Reilly—has taken on the superhuman job of spearheading the distribution of butter and beef. However, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the publicity that has been given to the scheme has resulted in twice as many organisations coming forward this winter as were in operation last year.

Local Government Reform

2. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on the cost of local government reform in Wales.

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): The Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government had a full discussion about the Touche Ross report on the costs of local government reorganisation at its meeting on 17 February. Since the report was published I have received three written representations.

Mr. Jones: The Secretary of State will be aware of the view of the Association of Welsh Counties that a balanced interpretation of the Touche Ross report suggests that the cost of local government reorganisation in Wales could be anything between £100 million and £150 million. So how can the Secretary of State justify his claim that the cost will be recovered in seven years, bearing in mind from previous experience the fact that local government reform is an absolute disaster in financial terms? Is it true that this year's county budgets have been cut to find money for the reforms?

Mr. Hunt: On the last point, no, that is not true. As the hon. Gentleman will see if he looks at the figures, the total standard spending for local authorities in the coming financial year is up by 3·1 per cent., even before one takes into account the amount set aside for community care, which puts the increase up to 3·5 per cent.

On the point about the costs of local government reorganisation, I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not arguing against reorganisation. First, the costs are spread

over 15 years. Secondly, they do not take account of the annual savings, which earlier reports have suggested will be substantial. That is why I say that the reorganisation of local government could pay for itself within about seven years.

Mr. Roger Evans: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the expense of the previous local government reorganisation was largely due to the creation of multi-tier arrangements, which have so disastrously failed? Will he give some reassurance and some figures about, for example, what savings will be occasioned by his present proposals, particularly in the cases of Monmouth and Gwent? Gwent county council is seen by the public as an unnecessary and extravagant layer of local government.

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. Substantial annual savings will flow from the reorganisation into unitary authorities. For the mid-range of about 20 to 23 authorities, one is looking at annual savings of between £12 million and £17 million. Of course, the previous example cannot be followed for the reasons that my hon. Friend gave. We shall make absolutely sure that the reorganisation presents value for money as well as establishing good, strong local government.

Mr. Murphy: Will the Secretary of State acknowledge that not only the county councils but many district councils believe that he has seriously underestimated the cost of local government reform? Does he accept that many of the figures are pure guesswork, especially when it comes to the amount that local authorities will have to pay out in redundancy payments? How can he justify the fact that local government might cost as much as £150 million when Wales is recoiling at the savagery of the cuts to education and other local government services?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman made a number of points. First, local government reorganisation into unitary authorities is widely welcomed in Wales. The hon. Gentleman should recall that, right at the start of the consultation process, no strong lobby argued that we should continue the existing system, because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) said, there are savings to be achieved by having one unitary local authority administering services.

To put the matter into context, local authority budgets for this financial year total £2,472 million. If one sets that against the figures that we have mentioned, one sees that the transitional cost would total perhaps between 2 and 6 per cent. I believe that the reorganisation will represent great value for money and that we shall have better local government as a result.

Abattoirs

3. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the effect of EC regulations on small and medium-sized abattoirs in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Numerous.

Mr. Dafis: I hope that the Secretary of State and the Minister will appreciate that the costs that have been imposed on small and medium-sized abattoirs because of the current interpretation of the European hygiene regulations are crippling, especially for those abattoirs that now provide slaughter close to the point of production, produce excellent quality meat and have an excellent record on animal welfare—just the sort of business that we should encourage.

The most significant specific problem facing those abattoirs is the requirement for official veterinary surgeons to be present at the ante-mortem inspection, when that job is perfectly capable of being done by meat inspectors. Will the Secretary of State ensure that meat inspectors will be allowed to carry out that work, because it would have a significant effect in improving the prospects for small abattoirs?

Mr. Hunt: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman recalls that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the old system, which had dual standards between meat for the home market and that for the export market. It was also felt that some establishments were undercutting others that conformed to high hygiene standards. That is why we are seeking to introduce the new standards, while minimising the burden on small abattoirs in particular.

I reassure the hon. Gentleman that, although it is necessary to have veterinary supervision, we are encouraging local authorities to take practical measures to keep down costs. We have taken a number of steps to help smaller abattoirs in particular, including increasing the throughput limit for small slaughterhouses. We have also secured a review, as the hon. Gentleman will know, by the Commission of the implications of the meat hygiene directives for traditional small businesses.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will my right hon. Friend note that the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) is shared not only by my colleagues on the Conservative Benches but, beyond Wales, throughout the United Kingdom? Although we recognise the steps to which my right hon. Friend referred, in particular to aid small abattoirs to comply with the regulations, veterinary changes are primarily the great barrier. Will my right hon. Friend note that the House desires still more to be done to assist that sector of agriculture?

Mr. Hunt: I recognise the compelling point that my hon. Friend has made. Supervision by official veterinarians —*[Interruption.]*—if I can get the word right—or veterinary consultants, is important. I apologise; I have had a rather heavy St. David's day lunch.

Veterinary ante-mortem inspections is an important part of improving public protection and helping the meat market to compete in the single market. Such inspection can diagnose conditions not visible at a post-mortem. I am satisfied that by relating veterinary inspection at slaughterhouses to throughput and standards of operation and by concentrating the arrangements for veterinary attendance at low-throughput premises on ante-mortem inspection, we have struck about the right balance. However, I appreciate the issues raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Alex Carlile: The Secretary of State was kind enough to see me on 26 January, along with two of the proprietors of the most successful abattoirs in Wales. On that occasion, the representatives, including Mr. Edward Hammer, my constituent, made clear to the Secretary of State the desperate trouble that they were in as a result of the new regulations. What, if anything, has the Secretary of State done since that meeting to alleviate the problem?

Mr. Hunt: I have done a number of things, to which I have already referred. I have written to all local authorities seeking to bring down the costs of inspection—*[Interruption.]* I can tell the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that St. David was the man of water. When we refer to a St. David's day lunch, we refer to the consumption of water, nothing else.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Secretary of State may have written many letters to many local authorities, but where were he and the Welsh Office when the directive was negotiated? When I read it, it seemed as though the vets had negotiated the directive. The problem is that duplication occurs between the meat inspectors and the vets—much work could still be done by the meat inspectors. Charges vary so much between local authority districts. What is the Secretary of State going to do about the problem?

Mr. Hunt: From his own experience, the right hon. Gentleman will know the importance of food hygiene. We are talking about constantly improving food hygiene so that the public can have every confidence, not only in the quality of food, but in the hygiene behind the provision of that food, which is important. That is why I was around when the directive was being negotiated and I supported the introduction of the standards. However, I recognise that we must do our best to minimise their impact, particularly on small businesses.

Youth Facilities

4. **Mr. Michael:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his plans for provision of youth facilities in Wales.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): I will continue to support local authorities and other organisations and agencies in their efforts to promote and develop provision for young people in Wales.

Mr. Michael: Those are fine words, but lacking in content. Does the Minister recognise that the inadequate finances made available by the Welsh Office to local authorities this year means that the efforts of local people, voluntary organisations and far-sighted councillors—like those in my local authority of South Glamorgan, which has sought over the years to build up the youth service—are being undermined? Does he agree with my constituent, Mrs. Yeo of Tremorfa, who, seeing the effect of the inadequate resources on her 15-year-old son and others in his age group, suggested that the cuts should be made to the Minister's finances in the Welsh Office, not forced on the local youth service?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am aware that some authorities are thinking of limiting spending on youth services. However, I must remind the hon. Gentleman—as did my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—that we have increased the revenue settlement for local authorities for the coming year by 3·1 per cent. If one takes the past two years together, there is an increase of 25 per cent. and, over three years, there has been an increase of 29 per cent.

Mr. Ron Davies: The Minister of State has obviously not had a share of the Secretary of State's St. David's day diod. The Minister should acknowledge that under the revenue support grant settlement for the forthcoming financial year, every county authority in Wales is having to cut its youth service provision. Does not he recognise how short-sighted that policy is, particularly when growing youth unemployment is pushing young people towards disaffection and alienation? Does not he realise the dangers that his policies are inflicting on the fabric of our society?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The choice is for the local authorities. We have done a great deal to support the youth organisations that are concerned with the well-being of our young people. Since 1988 we have provided grants worth about £1·4 million for national voluntary youth organisations. We have established the Youth Agency, funded to the tune of about £360,000 this year. We have provided £2 million worth of youth facilities since 1991-92 under the urban programme. And we have also ensured that we have met the youth training guarantee.

Labour Statistics

5. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the difference between the number of men and the number of women in full-time employment in Wales and Mid Glamorgan currently and in June 1979.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Figures are not available separately for Mid Glamorgan. The proportion of the male work force in civilian employment or training was 7 per cent. greater in 1979 than 1992. The corresponding figure for women, including part-time employees, was the same for both years.

Mr. Griffiths: Even given the paucity of his figures, I hope that the Minister will admit that the reduction that they show proves that there is still a real crisis in employment in Wales. I hope that he will make two commitments this afternoon: first, that no part of Wales should lose its assisted area status in the current review. In its press releases the Welsh Office trumpets the value of that assistance to industry in Wales from time to time. Secondly, will the hon. Gentleman call in the banks in Wales and get them to review their policy towards small businesses? The policy of the banks—there have been a number of complaints against Lloyds in particular—is causing a large number of small businesses to go into liquidation quite unnecessarily. Will he give those commitments now?

Mr. Jones: I assure the hon. Gentleman that both matters are under active consideration. Many Ministers have been involved in discussions with the banks.

The assisted area review is being conducted by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, who is keeping in very close touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The hon. Gentleman should not adopt such a negative attitude to unemployment in Wales. It is too high—it is unacceptably high—but it behoves the hon. Gentleman to recognise that since the last time unemployment peaked, in 1985, male unemployment has risen by less than half the rate of United Kingdom unemployment and female employment has risen by about four times the rate in the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Morgan: As the Secretary of State seems to want to run away from answering questions on the economy today, may I tell him that I am in the rather fortunate

position of having not only a daffodil but a leek—a leak from the Conservative research department, in the form of its briefing for today's debate? The Secretary of State and his ministerial colleagues will never grasp the seriousness of unemployment in Wales while they rely on the garbage written by the Conservative research department. The document trumpets the major inward investment successes of 1992, yet the first three listed, General Electric at Nantgarw, Ford at Bridgend and Texaco at Pembroke, do not produce an additional job between them——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is Question Time; we have an Adjournment debate on the whole subject of Wales later. I ask the hon. Gentleman to put his question now.

Mr. Morgan: I have done.

Mr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman plainly shows that he has no question to ask. Once again, he chooses to ignore the realities of life in Wales, especially during the recession. Wales has been demonstrating the fundamental strength of its economy by the way in which it has been fighting back. Unemployment is now below the national average for the first time in 70 years. It is 0·3 per cent. lower; when we went into recession, it was 0·8 per cent. higher than the national average.

Employment Prospects

6. **Mr. Ray Powell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking to improve the employment prospects for the long-term unemployed in Ogmore, Mid Glamorgan and Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Extensive measures.

Mr. Powell: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will those measures reduce the unemployment in Ogmore and in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths)? In 1979, total unemployment in the Ogmore constituency, which then included Bridgend, was 3·7 per cent. It is now well over 20 per cent. in my area. In addition, there are long-term unemployed people and they were made unemployed by the actions of the Government since 1979 when they reduced manning in the steel industry and closed seven collieries. What does the Minister propose to do to employ people in my constituency, in Bridgend and throughout Wales?

Mr. Hunt: Of course, our economic policies will bring down unemployment, but there is always a lag between a reduction in inflation, which are now down to 1·7 per cent., and a reduction in interest rates, which is now down to 6 per cent. Even against that background and the background of the present recession, not only in this country but in many others, the Employment Service managed to place 1·4 million unemployed people back into jobs last year. Next year, starting in April, our programme of employment and training opportunities will give almost 1·5 million opportunities for unemployed people, especially those who have been out of work for some time.

Mr. Richards: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that prospects for the long-term unemployed in Ogmore, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, are infinitely better under this Government than they would be under a Labour Government, especially in the context of the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty? If the Opposition had their way, the social chapter would be included in the treaty and, if implemented, it would drastically affect unemployment in this country.

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the past seven years in Wales there has been a substantial reduction—41 per cent.—in the number of long-term unemployed. That represents a fall from 78,000 to 46,000—a reduction of 32,000. Wales now has record productivity and record manufacturing output. Our message is that Wales will lead the United Kingdom out of recession.

Mr. Ron Davies: The Secretary of State has another record. He has [illegible]4,000 unemployed people in Wales and one in three of them is long-term unemployed. The total cost of that unemployment to the Welsh economy is £1·2 billion. Those are the records of reality about which the Secretary of State chooses not to speak. Does not he realise that the time for his con tricks and cosmetics is past? If we are to tackle the problem of the long-term unemployed we need a completely new approach and a strategy that will renew our economy and revitalise our manufacturing sector.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman says that we need to revitalise our manufacturing sector. Let us look at the facts. Manufacturing output is 126·3 per cent. compared with 100 per cent. in 1979. It is up by over 25 per cent. The index of production in the United Kingdom over the past year was up by 0·4 per cent. while in Wales it was up by 1·4 per cent. Manufacturing productivity now stands at over £30,000 per employee, which is one of the highest anywhere in the United Kingdom and 6·4 per cent. above the United Kingdom average. When one looks at the facts one sees the answer to the hon. Gentleman. He should start talking up the Welsh economy and then we should certainly see the growth that we need.

Mr. Barry Porter: I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on the steps that they have already taken about employment in Wales. In view of the planning permission for the gas terminal at Point of Ayr, would not it be sensible for employment in Wales and in parts of Merseyside as well if some pressure were put on the Department of Trade and Industry to grant section 36 consent for the Connah's Quay power station? I hope that that will happen very soon.

Mr. Hunt: I recognise that my hon. Friend has been lobbying extremely hard on this subject. As he recognised, it is a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade because section 36 consent is under his aegis. I shall ensure that my hon. Friend's words are immediately conveyed to my right hon. Friend.

Valleys Line

7. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives of British Rail's valleys line network to discuss investment.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Cardiff-valleys network was one of the issues that my right hon. Friend discussed with the chairman of British Rail and his regional railways director when they met on 7 September last.

Dr. Howells: Does the Minister recognise that the huge growth in vehicle traffic over the past 20 years or so has

made many of our key trunk roads congested, dangerous and often the source of major pollution of the atmosphere? Will he ensure that our extensive rail networks are employed to their fullest extent and that adequate investment is made available to make them user-friendly and efficient so that we can get traffic off the roads and back on to the railways, where it should be?

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave supplementary credit approvals totalling £3·56 million to Mid and South Glamorgan for funding major investment projects in the valleys network. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we want to take traffic off the road and we are investigating the position of the A470 between Pontypridd and Coryton. We are looking at the possibilities of investment in rail to cover the increased use of that area and of that road in particular.

Mr. Sweeney: What are the prospects for a link between the valleys network and Cardiff bay? Secondly, is there any hope of getting a link with the Cardiff Wales airport?

Sir Wyn Roberts: My Department is supporting a study, commissioned by South Glamorgan county council in conjunction with other local authorities, British Rail and the Cardiff Bay development corporation, into options, including a light rail system, for improved public transport links between the valleys and Cardiff bay. The railway to Rhoose airport is a matter for South Glamorgan county council, which has discussed it with British Rail, but there has been no positive decision.

Mr. Rogers: Surely the Minister recognises that the valleys line is in a deplorable state, with trains running late and crowded. Often, the service is not available. When, as valley Members, we take up the issue with British Rail, its answer is that stock has had to be transferred to lines outside Wales because of general shortages. Will the Minister take up immediately with the relevant controllers of British Rail the matter of stealing railway stock from Wales and transferring it to England?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I shall consider and investigate what the hon. Gentleman has said. He will know as well as I do that operational matters are for British Rail rather than for me.

Jobs

8. **Mr. Donald Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what specific measures he proposes to take to safeguard existing jobs in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office, together with the development agencies and training and development councils, already has in train a number of measures to encourage enterprise, create new jobs and safeguard existing jobs.

Mr. Anderson: I have a simple question. What efforts has the Secretary of State made since October last year, when this came to light, to safeguard and protect the 3,000 jobs at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency at Swansea?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is primarily a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, but I am fully involved in the discussions and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that no decisions have been made. The current framework document for the agency expires in April of this year and it is therefore proper that all options should be carefully explored.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the best ways to bring down unemployment in Wales is to go on encouraging inward investment into the Principality, on which our record is second to none?

Mr. Hunt: Given the latest figures for inward investment, despite the worldwide recession, it is remarkable that, once again, previous records have been beaten. To have more than 200 promising projects, many of which are still to recruit and to invest their capital programmes, is a good sign of the optimism that is present in Wales; confidence and order books are high. Now, we want to see the growth in the economy that all that promises.

Mr. Alan Williams: As the Secretary of State is aware, we welcome all inward investment. Does he not think it grotesque, however, that at a time when he and his colleagues are, as previous Governments did, working to secure such investment, his Cabinet colleague, the Secretary of State for Transport, is putting at risk twice as many jobs in three agencies at Swansea as the jobs that are at risk at Fords? Will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Secretary of State for Transport understands clearly that privatisation should not be used as a weapon against regional policy?

Mr. Hunt: First, I welcome what the right hon. Gentleman said about inward investment. We are greatly assisted by many hon. Members on both sides of the House in making sure that we win investment. We are successful because we follow a team approach. I include in the team, of course, local authorities, agencies and hon. Members.

As I told the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), no decisions have been taken. I shall, of course, be fully involved in the discussions.

Exports

9. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether he will make a statement concerning the exportation of products from the Lampeter region.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am pleased to say that a number of firms in the Lampeter area are exporting very successfully.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in many hotels in the far east, and I include Jakarta—*[Interruption.]* I shall ask my question despite attempts by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), both in the Chamber and outside, to prevent me from doing so. Is my right hon. Friend—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in many parts of the far east, including Jakarta, the only type of bottled water that can be bought is, surprisingly, that from Perrier in France? Is he aware also that Lampeter bottles excellent water called Ty Nant? What is my right hon. Friend doing to promote its export?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Ty Nant spring water of Lampeter is well known to my Department, and I am aware of the success that has been achieved in exporting it abroad. My officials have visited the company and provided its representatives with advice and information about the opportunities that are available in overseas markets. I am glad to tell my hon. Friend that he will find Ty Nant spring water in western Europe, the United States of America and Australia. I dare say that it is what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State had for lunch today in honour of St. David, who was a man who had a predilection for water.

I am appalled, as I am sure the rest of the House will be, to hear my hon. Friend say that he was threatened by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) when he thought of tabling a question. We welcome questions from Conservative Members and from any Members of the House.

Mr. Flynn: Is the Minister aware that Lampeter is the centre of the organic farming industry of Wales, with one company there employing 150 people? As organic farming is good for the environment and for people, will he encourage its growth so that we can eat vegetables and other foodstuffs as pure as Dewi Sant?

Sir Wyn Roberts: Seeing the daffodil on the hon. Gentleman's lapel and on the lapels of all round the Chamber, I am pleased that I am wearing a leek, which is at least edible. Yes, we encourage organic farming. We hope that it will be accompanied by warm libations of water.

Welsh Economic Council

10. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received to date concerning his plans to establish a Welsh economic council.

Mr. David Hunt: A total of 88.

Mr. Wigley: On this, St. David's day, will the Secretary of State accept that an economic council will not do away with the democratic deficit in Wales or improve the accountability of the Welsh Office and the Welsh quangos to the people of Wales? Does he accept that the only way in which we shall get sensitive government that can concentrate attention on the needs of Wales and respond to the widespread dissatisfaction with the present system of government is to have our own parliament in Cardiff that will be answerable to the people of Wales?

Mr. Hunt: That point was not made in the 88 representations that I received, so the hon. Gentleman has made it on this occasion. I had hoped that he would say that he very much welcomed the proposal for a Welsh economic council. That has certainly been the view of almost everyone who responded to the consultation document.

I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has a long-standing commitment to the establishment of a bureaucratic Welsh assembly, but he knows that he and I have differed in that respect for a long time. Notwithstanding that background, I hope that he will welcome a Welsh economic council.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Barristers (Payments)

24. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Attorney-General what was the highest sum paid to a barrister in respect of *(a)* a prosecuting brief, *(b)* daily refreshers and *(c)* the highest combined total paid for a case in (i) criminal cases and (ii) civil cases in the past year; and if he will make a statement.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Derek Spencer): The specific answers to my hon. Friend's questions are, for criminal cases—(a) £329,000; (b) £750; (c) £545,678; and for civil cases £82,600.

High fees of that nature are paid only in a few very heavy and complex cases spread over a number of years. The average fee for a case in the Crown court paid by the Crown prosecution service in the year 1991-92 was £366.

Mr. Greenway: Is not my hon. and learned Friend concerned that tens of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money has been wasted on collapsed fraud and other trials? Will he urgently set up an inquiry so that we may learn the lessons of what went wrong in each case and ensure that there is no repetition?

The Solicitor-General: That money has not been wasted. By definition, the function of a trial is to test the evidence. In the Plasser case, the magistrates heard the evidence and committed for trial; the judge heard the evidence and ruled that there was no case to answer. That is the function of a criminal trial.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman recognise that in the payment of ordinary fees in heavyish cases, there remains great concern at the Bar because the Government are not paying their debts to lawyers in reasonable time? Will he take steps to ensure that the central taxing units meet their targets?

The Solicitor-General: I can only advise the hon. and learned Gentleman to get a better clerk. In his next case, he will be entitled to an interim payment after 20 days. When the case is concluded, his clerk can put in a fee note for payment on account—long before it ever gets to the central taxation unit, as I know from my own experience.

Mr. Burns: Given the escalating costs of justice and the importance of everyone having access to the law to redress their problems, should not the Government urgently consider introducing a no win-no fee voluntary system of justice?

The Solicitor-General: My hon. Friend's point is already under consideration. However, life in the Crown court is rather different from what some suggest. The standard fee for a guilty plea is £113. The standard brief fee for a case that lasts up to three days, including preparation and the first day, is £217, with a refresher of £150 per day. If the case lasts three days, that means a payment of £517 for work spread over at least four days.

Maastricht Treaty

25. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what further advice he has to give on the Maastricht treaty in respect of parliamentary amendments.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I set out in my written answer to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) on 22 February the principles applicable to amendments to the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. I shall advise the House on specific issues as necessary.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Attorney-General admit that he came up with that advice the other day because a political shift had taken place in the House? I ask the Attorney-General to be prepared. Because of the Cabinet split and two Cabinet Ministers meeting with the prince of darkness, the iron lady and her guru, the right hon. and learned Gentleman ought to have other advice ready. If the Prime Minister gets the sack and the other lot take over, the right hon. and learned Gentleman better have a separate piece of legal advice, because the one that he has will not be good enough.

The Attorney-General: That may be the way that legal advice is given in the principality where the hon. Gentleman is prince but in the world where you rule, Madam Speaker, and in this country, legal advice is given independently and dispassionately.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is strange that the Leader of the Opposition says that he is in favour of the Maastricht treaty but then does his damnedest to frustrate the Bill's passage through the House?

The Attorney-General: I give legal advice to the House, so I shall not comment—but I well understand my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Fraser: I am sure that the Attorney-General agrees with the constitutional proposition that the Government derive their authority from Parliament, not the other way around. Having advised the House that the Government can treat the passage of amendment No. 27 with impunity, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman advise the House whether, if it wants to adopt the social chapter, it would effectively be able to do so by adopting amendment No. 443 or some other amendment? Does not the Attorney-General have a duty to advise the House how it may properly express its will?

The Attorney-General: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman invites me to comment on an amendment on which the Chairman of Ways and Means has not yet taken a decision, and which is not yet even before the Committee.

Government Departments

26. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will list his statutory powers to take legal action against Government Departments for breaches of the law.

The Attorney-General: My powers to take action for breaches of the law, whether ex officio or at the relation of a citizen, are founded in common law.

Mr. Wardell: Given that the Attorney-General's authority is derived from common law, will he explain why he has never permitted a citizen of this country to take civil action in the courts against a Minister or Government Department, and why he is unwilling to explain his reasons for such a refusal?

The Attorney-General: I am not sure that the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question is right. When I lend my name in a relator action to a citizen in order to bring proceedings—whomsoever they are against—I review the matter dispassionately and carefully, in accordance with the law and the strength of the case that the citizen puts before me.

Fraud

27. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has to reduce the level of crimes of fraud.

The Solicitor-General: The Serious Fraud Office and the fraud investigation group of the Crown prosecution service are designed to deter the incidence of serious fraud by providing for effective investigation and prosecution.

Mr. Flynn: As the Solicitor-General is aware, the law mercilessly pursues small earners for fraud offences involving payment of various taxes through the courts. How will the hon. and learned Gentleman ensure that those having incomes of £150,000 a year who pay little or no tax are brought to book? Does he think that the case of Mr. John Birt is one of tax evasion, fraud, or theft?

The Solicitor-General: That matter is for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Serious Fraud Office has a budget of £21 million, 133 permanent staff, and 90 police attached to it. It is testimony of our determination to get to the bottom of white collar fraud.

Mr. Merchant: Can my hon. and learned Friend give an assurance that the Serious Fraud Office has the expertise to deal with all the ramifications of recent allegations of local government corruption?

The Solicitor-General: I can assure my hon. Friend of that. If fraud in local government is so widespread that it cannot be dealt with adequately by the Serious Fraud Office, no doubt the fraud investigation group of the Crown prosecution service can be called in. I assure my hon. Friend that, one way or another, the allegations will be thoroughly investigated and that if local government needs to be cleaned up, we shall ensure that it is cleaned up.

Sentences (Increase)

28. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases have been put forward to the Court of Appeal for consideration for a possible increase in sentence as a result of his intervention during 1992.

The Attorney-General: In 1992, the Law Officers sought leave to refer 41 cases to the Court of Appeal, including four to the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland. Three were later withdrawn in the light of further information. Twenty-one of those cases have been determined to date, in 19 of which the original sentence has been increased.

Mr. Hawkins: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his answer.

My constituents, and people throughout the country, consider the right of appeal for the prosecution one of the most valuable pieces of legislation that the Government have introduced. There are still far too many cases in which unreasonably lenient sentences are imposed. May I urge my right hon. and learned Friend to continue to

consider exercising the power that the Government have now rightly given him whenever there is a public outcry, as there has been in response to a number of recent cases?

The Attorney-General: I agree with my hon. Friend. Parliament was very wise to institute that power. In an effective criminal justice system it is important not only to be able to reduce over-severe sentences, but—if the Court of Appeal thinks it right—to be able to increase unduly lenient sentences. Similarly, it is important not only for the innocent not to be convincted, but for the system to be capable of bringing the guilty to justice.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid (United Nations Target)

34. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further representations he has received regarding the desirability of the United Kingdom Government's achieving the United Nations target of 0·7 per cent. gross national product for overseas aid.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): We continue to receive representations from hon. Members and others.

Mr. Griffiths: Why does not the Minister listen to those representations—representations which might have prevented the disgraceful position in which he has placed the country, which has dropped to 13th in the league of aid-giving countries per head of population? Why does he not listen to the representations of Scottish Education and Action for Development, the Scottish Churches Council, Oxfam and all the other organisations and citizens in this country who are keen to ensure that the Government play their part in helping the third world—a part they are manifestly failing to play at present?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman should listen to some of the facts. Expenditure figures relating to the last year for which such figures are available show an increase of 3 per cent. on the year before in real terms, and expenditure in the coming year is to increase by 1 per cent. in real terms on last year's expenditure. At a time of great economic stringency, that is indeed success for the ODA budget.

Mr. Wells: Is it not a fact that our aid programme is one of the best-focused on poverty? In a tough year for expenditure, we have increased the budget for overseas development to £1·9 billion. Does not that show the generosity of people in this country, working with the non-governmental organisations, which also contribute a significant amount to the third world?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes. At a time of difficulty, we have done extremely well for the ODA budget. It is also true that there are considerable contributions from other quarters. United Kingdom direct investment overseas is half the European Community total; the 1991 estimate was £3,000 million.

Mr. Meacher: How can the Minister justify cutting the aid budget as a proportion of gross national product by almost half over the past 13 years, and planning further substantial real cuts in two of the next three years, when over the past four years his Government have given British banks £2·25 billion—50 per cent. more than the ODA's total annual aid budget—in tax reliefs against possible defaults on third world loans? In fact, there have been no defaults, and not a penny of that money has been used to defray the debts of some of the world's poorest nations.

Ministers like to say—as this Minister does—that they concentrate on the poorest. Since when have Barclays and the National Westminster bank been in that category? If there is now great pressure on public expenditure, would it not be better for the banks, rather than some of the poorest nations on earth, to feel the draught?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman asks several questions. Let us deal with the public expenditure survey for the next three years. At a time of great economic stringency, if he takes all forms of external assistance, he will find an increase of 10 per cent. in cash terms and 1 per cent. in real terms. *[Interruption.]* It is the ODA's budget. If the hon. Gentleman were to penalise the banks' accounting procedures for lending to the third world. It would stop them lending to the third world.

Mr. Bates: Does my hon. Friend agree that to the recipients of aid the quality of aid is as important as its quantity? Will he compare the quality of British aid with that of other donor countries?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The quality of aid certainly is important, but the enormous pressure on other aid programmes must be recognised. For example, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the United States and Italy have all announced plans to cut their aid budgets—in some cases substantially.

Overseas Aid

35. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the latest estimates for overseas aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer set out the Government's spending plans for 1993-94 to 1995-96, including those for overseas aid, in his autumn statement on 12 November last year.

Mr. Skinner: In view of the overseas aid figures that we have just heard and the reduction in aid to third-world countries, does not the Minister feel a little ashamed when he compares the fact that in 1991 the top four clearing banks set aside £720 million, yet third-world countries had no debts written off? Are not the Government running a strange society when the Chancellor of the Exchequer can write off £4,700 and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food can have £20,000 worth of assets added to his property, whereas little kids in South Africa and elsewhere with matchstick legs get hardly anything from this Government? If debts are going to be written off for banks and others, they should be written off for poor countries in the third world.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Member characteristically ignores many of the facts and makes a load of allegations that are quite unsubstantiated. Britain led the world in debt relief under the Trinidad terms initiated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, from which 14 countries have benefited, 11 of which were the poorest countries in Africa. Many of the private banks have written off debts,

but the hon. Member, once again, seeks to penalise the banks by withdrawing tax relief, which would stop them lending to the third world.

Miss Emma Nicholson: In the light of Shyam Bathia's article in the *Observer* yesterday, which highlighted the tragic plight of those in the marshes of Iraq, will the Minister join me in thanking the ODA and the Foreign Office for their expertise in monitoring much more accurately than any other nation what was happening in the area? That has allowed organisations such as the Amar appeal to spend the only bilateral aid that is going into the marshes from the west, which comes from the Government and for which we are most truly grateful?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Yes, I am delighted to support my hon. Friend. I can say from my knowledge in other fields that the Government's contribution to help with all forms of humanitarian assistance in Iraq in the past two years amounts to £56 million.

Mr. Spearing: The Minister properly emphasises the quality of aid, which depends on the freedom and choice of the Government to determine their own aid programme. Does he agree that under the treaty of European union there is some compulsion to co-ordinate aid policy? Would not that, to some extent at least, constrict the choices that are open to the Government?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The hon. Gentleman and I, and others, debated that only last week.

Mr. Spearing: I did not.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The previous right hon. Member for South Down claimed many times to be participating in debates by listening. The hon. Member knows that the requirement in the treaty of Maastricht only enshrines practice heretofore. All members of the European Community will co-ordinate their aid policies, but that co-ordination does not undermine the right of each country to maintain its own bilateral aid programme.

Population Policies

36. **Mr. Ottaway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the percentage of the overseas aid budget allocated to population policies.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Some £26·5 million, or 1·5 per cent. of the aid programme, was spent on direct support for population programmes in 1991.

Mr. Ottaway: I thank my hon Friend for that answer and congratulate him on the story so far, but, in view of the growing concern about population, will he support the proposal that the G7 countries allocate at least 4 per cent. of their aid programmes to population policies? Can he confirm that his Department will be leading for the Government in the run-up to the United Nations conference in Cairo next year?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I can confirm that the Overseas Development Administration will be leading for the Government at the Cairo conference. I am afraid that I cannot agree with my hon. Friend on the question of a target for population matters in the aid programme, although I congratulate him on his interest and on pressing the point. We are not happy with financial targets, but the Government are happy and the Department is keen to have targets for the number of countries and for the projects that we can initiate in the next two years. We hope to have 15 projects over two years and to double the number of countries involved.

Sir David Steel: In view of the alarming forecast given at the Rio summit of the trends in world population growth and their effect on the environment, should not these policies have a much higher priority in the Government's budget at home and abroad?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Of course, rapid population growth of the type to which the right hon. Gentleman refers will cause environmental problems, but the links between population growth and the environment are complex. The ODA is funding research to enhance understanding of that subject.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: We have a statement. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I can hear his point of order after that.

Local Government (Wales)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about local government in Wales.

I am today publishing a comprehensive and detailed White Paper setting out the Government's conclusions on the reform of Welsh local government. This follows a consultative process lasting more than two years, and I take this opportunity once again to express my gratitude to the Welsh local authority associations for their wholehearted and constructive participation in that process. I am also publishing a concise public information leaflet for widespread distribution in Wales, explaining the Government's plans, and a separate question and answer booklet for all local government staff. I am placing copies of all these documents in the Vote Office.

The Government's conclusions are these. First, a single tier of unitary authorities will be established throughout Wales. As a result of the citizens charter, the Government are of course committed to making public services more responsive to the people who use them. We believe that, under unitary authority arrangements, local people will have a better understanding of who is providing their local services, and this will result in greater accountability. Removing duplication in this instance will improve quality of service and, by achieving better co-ordination and efficiency in the management and delivery of services, achieve better value for money for the taxpayer. I believe that there will be widespread support for the unitary authority solution in this House and throughout Wales.

Secondly, the Government propose that 21 unitary authorities should be established in Wales. The areas of these are set out in detail in the White Paper. The large towns of Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Wrexham will all be served by unitary authorities, as will traditional counties such as Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire, Cardiganshire and Anglesey. In making these proposals I have sought to balance the demands of local community loyalty with the requirements of effective and efficient service delivery, taking account of demographic factors, population distribution, geography and other relevant considerations.

Thirdly, subject to what I shall say in a moment, the new authorities will be statutorily responsible for the full range of local authority services. They will, therefore, be responsible for education, social services, housing, highways, planning and, for example, trading standards. This reflects my commitment to strong local government in Wales. The continuing development of the enabling role of local government and individual authorities' willingness to work together in the provision of specialist services have confirmed my view that services can be delivered efficiently and economically by the authorities proposed in the White Paper. The only functional changes envisaged under these plans are that, henceforth, responsibility for the fire service in Wales will lie with three combined authorities rather than with the new unitary authorities. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's proposals for this are set out in my White Paper. My right hon. and learned Friend also intends to make a statement soon about the future of the police service in both England and Wales.

I have already drawn to the attention of the House the many benefits that unitary authorities will bring. Some cannot be measured in financial terms, but must nevertheless be borne in mind. The new structure will generate savings in the running costs of local government. Independent consultants estimate that these could range up to £17 million a year for a structure of 20 unitary authorities. But there will be one-off costs from the transition which the consultants estimate could range from about £65 million to about £150 million over 15 years. I am confident that reorganisation will pay for itself well within this period.

In addition to our proposals for unitary authorities, the Government also plan to enhance the role of community councils. I propose to take powers in the Bill to specify matters on which the new unitary authorities will have to consult community councils before decisions are taken. I should obviously prefer to see a voluntary development of close working relationships between unitary authorities and community councils, but should that not occur, the Bill will provide for statutory powers to be exercised in that event. I shall not hesitate to exercise those powers if Parliament decides to give them to me.

I have also carefully considered the provisions, unique to Wales, under which local people can vote to dissolve their community councils. It would be wrong to withdraw such democratic rights, but I am satisfied that the provisions do not afford community councils proper and adequate protection. The Government propose to remedy that, and the details are set out in the White Paper, together with a proposal for amending the provisions relating to the establishment of community councils.

The proposals will have significant implications for local government staff. The Government expect that the vast majority of local authority staff will be transferred by order to one or other of the new authorities. I propose to establish a staff commission, whose principal function will be to have oversight of the transfer process and to advise me accordingly. It will be for the new authorities to assess their staff requirements and to make any necessary adjustments. Compensation will be payable in the event of early retirements or redundancies, should the latter prove necessary. Final decisions have not yet been taken on whether changes should be made to the existing scheme for early retirements.

A Bill will be introduced in due course to implement these proposals. My intention is that there should be elections to shadow authorities in 1994, and the new authorities will assume their responsibilities from 1 April 1995. The Bill will provide for a residuary body to be established to wind up the affairs of existing authorities.

Today's White Paper is a document of the greatest significance for the governance of Wales. The Welsh Grand Committee will soon have an opportunity to discuss it in detail, as part of our consideration of the structure of government in Wales. The Government believe, and I believe strongly, that the White Paper maps out a path for the creation of a distinctive, innovative and efficient local government structure which will serve Wales well for many years to come. The opportunity is here: now we must seize it. I commend the White Paper to the House.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I am sure that all of us in Wales will be glad that at last the Secretary of State has concluded his deliberations and published the White Paper so that local authorities at least know what he has in store for them.

I received a copy of a detailed document shortly after 3 o'clock, in the middle of Welsh questions. I hope that the Secretary of State understands the difficult circumstances in which my hon. Friends and I find ourselves in responding to a document which is detailed and complex and which will recast the face of Welsh local government. In turn, I recognise that we will have every opportunity to debate the matter in the Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff next Monday.

The Secretary of State and his party are alone in Wales in believing that unitary authorities of the sort that he is proposing are acceptable except in the context of a Welsh assembly. Does he accept that county and district authorities are united in their belief that a proper mechanism needs to be put in place to secure strategic planning of public services and that the unaccountable Welsh Office, operating through unelected quangos, is not even a poor substitute for a democratically elected assembly of the Welsh people? The most pressing need for reform is not local government but the quango system itself in which 1,200 appointees of the Secretary of State spend about £1·5 billion of public money while the wishes of 70 per cent. of the electors who voted for an assembly at the last general election are ignored.

Does the Secretary of State accept that he has not achieved the consensus to which he referred in his statement of 3 March 1992? In addition to the objections from local authorities, his plans are now opposed by the Trades Union Congress, the Confederation of British Industry and other public bodies in Wales such as the health authorities. The right hon. Gentleman will know that there is broad support for the proposal effectively to recreate borough status for Cardiff, Newport, Swansea and Wrexham. Does he have any plans to examine in more depth the future of our capital city?

In addition, would it not be appropriate to recognise Cardiff's capital status by using this reorganisation to integrate Cardiff with its hinterland in the Vale of Glamorgan and to abolish the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation and hand its functions over to democratic control?

There will be considerable concern at some of the right hon. Gentleman's proposals for the valleys authorities. I ask him to recognise that he will receive further vigorous representations. Given that he has neither a mandate from Wales nor consensus, is not he ill-advised to press ahead in the face of opposition with an unrealistic timetable?

Will the Secretary of State confirm that his judgments on costs are not shared by the members of his consultative committee? No potential savings have been identified for future running costs and little income would be generated from the disposal of property. Therefore, how does he propose to recoup the transitional costs, which are likely to be more than £100 million?

What estimate has the right hon. Gentleman made of job losses? I am advised that, contrary to the Secretary of State's statement, some 20 per cent. of local authority jobs could go. The loss of some 30,000 jobs—if that figure is correct—would be devastating in personal terms, obviously, for the people involved and would cost the Welsh economy some £270 million per annum.

When the right hon. Gentleman establishes the staff commission, will he ensure that there is proper representation from the staff who will be affected by the reorganisation, their trade union representatives and local authority interests directly? He will be aware of the fine record of Welsh local authorities as being effective and efficient providers of services. Any suggestion that that role be diminished or that they become merely enabling authorities will be fiercely resisted.

On the timetable of the Bill, when does the Secretary of State propose that it will come before the House? When does he expect it to receive Royal Assent? Will he assure us that all Welsh Members will be able to participate in the Committee which considers the Bill? When does he expect the elections to the shadow authorities to take place? Will next year's district council elections proceed?

On behalf of the Opposition, may I welcome the strengthening of community councils and the decision to put the consultative ability on a statutory basis. However, the Secretary of State hinted that the procedure for a referendum was undemocratic. If there is a democratic deficit in Wales, it is the lack of a Welsh assembly, for which all Opposition Members argue. English authorities do not have a procedure for abolishing their community councils by referendum. Would it not make sense to bring Wales into line with England in that regard?

The proposals are not quite so bad as we might have feared.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Oh yes they are.

Mr. Davies: I am speaking in general terms. I understand that the hon. and learned Gentleman has strong views against the proposals, which he will undoubtedly want to put. The proposals are not as bad as we could have feared, but the Secretary of State would do well to recognise that the Bill will receive the closest attention. He will face united pressure from Opposition Members to ensure that we have an all-Wales elected assembly and that the new system of local government is meaningful to the communities which it has to represent, democratic, and sufficiently viable to provide and deliver the full range of services to the people of Wales.

Mr. Hunt: By the standards of this place, that was a warm welcome. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry to indict the hon. Gentleman, but I had expected stronger criticism. I am delighted with the way in which he has received the proposals. He said that they were not as bad as he expected. As I do not know what he expected, I can only comfort myself with the thought that they are better than he expected.

I apologise if the statement was delivered late to the hon. Gentleman. I recognise that that is a problem of long standing. However, he accepted that we would have an opportunity in the Welsh Grand Committee, when we debate the structure of government in Wales, to deal with many of the points that he raised.

I believe that within its existing boundaries Cardiff is an entity with which local people can identify. It is of adequate size for service delivery. However, I share the vision of those who have argued that the status and importance of our capital city of Cardiff should be enhanced. The way to proceed is not to extend its boundaries artificially but to consider ways of improving the quality of its facilities and its urban environment. Therefore, I propose to invite South Glamorgan county council, Cardiff city council and Cardiff Bay Development Corporation to discuss with me how best that vision can be fulfilled. One possibility which I should be happy to

[Mr. Hunt]

consider is for the Welsh Office to contribute to a major study of how Cardiff's position as the capital city of Wales could be developed in the next 25 years.

The hon. Gentleman said that the timetable was unrealistic, but I would point out that I gave the operational date of 1 April 1995 some two years ago. Today I have demonstrated how I believe that the timetable can be achieved.

On running costs, I make no criticism of the hon. Gentleman because he saw the statement only at the last moment, but I referred in my statement to studies of the running costs that can be saved. For 20 authorities—we propose 21—the saving could be up to £17 million a year.

The hon. Gentleman referred to staff. I am anxious to send the question and answer brief to everyone who works in local authorities in Wales. It answers directly the point that the hon. Gentleman made. I want all staff in the local authorities in Wales to recognise that the vast majority of them will transfer from one authority to the new ones. I believe that there have been references to large-scale redundancies, and I hope that my reassurance will demonstrate that those fears are groundless.

I shall, of course, establish a staff commission which will be broad based and wide ranging. I should like to move reasonably swiftly on its establishment. That will be a matter for the House, but if local authorities agree, I would like the commission to be established in shadow form immediately after Second Reading of the Bill.

On enabling powers, the hon. Gentleman will know that I am committed to local authorities developing their functions even more as enablers rather than just as providers. I believe that that will provide national and local taxpayers with better value for money, and better services as well.

I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that his question about the timing of the introduction of the Bill and of its Royal Assent is not a matter for me and that I must refer it to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House.

I believe that, when the proposals are analysed, they will be seen as a challenge to everyone in Wales not only to pioneer a new form of local authority, which can be set as an example to the rest of the United Kingdom, but to make a considerable success of it.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): I assure my right hon. Friend that in Monmouthshire his proposals will be greeted by near universal enthusiasm and gratitude.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): What does the hon. Gentleman know about it?

Mr. Evans: I happen to know my constituency rather better than the hon. Gentleman, who intervened from a sedentary position.

I wish to refer my right hon. Friend to one important point in paragraph 3.7 of the White Paper, which states:

"The Government is not proposing to increase the number of Lord Lieutenants immediately".

Now that we have got rid of the ghost of Gwent, we hope that it will be interred for ever. May we have some reassurance from my right hon. Friend that Monmouthshire will have its own lord lieutenant and high sheriff at an early date?

Mr. Hunt: Throughout the two-year consultation, I have been well aware of the strong feelings of my hon. Friend and of his constituents about their wish for the return of the county of Monmouthshire. That is incorporated, of course, in the proposals which I am presenting in the White Paper. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his vigorous fight to bring about what has been announced today.

As set out in the White Paper, there are no immediate plans concerning lord lieutenants, but I will listen closely to what my hon. Friend has to say on this and other issues as they affect the new Monmouthshire, which will take effect from 1 April 1995.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Secretary of State want to be remembered as the man who abolished the ancient county of Montgomeryshire, as he proposes to do in the White Paper? Can he explain to the House why he has apparently changed his mind and, particularly, why he considers that the traditional county of Montgomeryshire does not deserve the same consideration as that afforded to the traditional counties of Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire and Monmouthshire? Will he explain why he has ignored the clear will of the people throughout the existing county of Powys? Does he understand that, to people in rural mid Wales, finding the logic of the proposals will be a game of political hunt the thimble, where there is no logic to be found?

Above all, will the right hon. Gentleman explain himself to the people of the existing county of Powys, who will be severely disappointed at his disgraceful and unpredicted change of mind without, latterly, giving proper opportunity for consultation to the districts that he now wishes to destroy?

Mr. Hunt: I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) will raise the same issues with me as the hon. and learned Gentleman. They have both argued strongly for the re-establishment of the historic counties of Breconshire, Radnorshire and Montgomeryshire. However, after the most intensive discussions with local authority associations, I have concluded that Montgomeryshire could not be effective as a single-tier authority. Like the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), I share the views of local people that those historic identities should be preserved. I have received many representations from local people who want to continue to live in Montgomeryshire. As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, the Post Office has no objection to people still referring to themselves as living in the historic county of Montgomeryshire——

Mr. Carlile: How exciting.

Mr. Hunt: If the hon. and learned Gentleman will listen, I shall explain how I want to develop the policy. If he refers to the White Paper, he will see that it refers to the flexible approach to internal management arrangements, which I want to encourage and which may well provide an opportunity to move towards the position for which my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth and the hon. and learned Gentleman have been arguing. The hon. and learned Gentleman should read the White Paper before making his criticisms.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that those local authorities for which the writing is on the wall will be prevented from going on a spending spree before they are done away with?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right to stress that it is important to ensure, not only that we have good, strong local government, but that it represents value for money. For the first time during reorganisation of local government, the same Government will be responsible for the original idea, the production of the White Paper, the introduction of the legislation and the new unitary authorities. We shall ensure that the sort of problem of which my hon. Friend warned will not occur.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Opposition do not believe that it was good enough to receive the document one minute before the right hon. Gentleman made his statement.

I welcome the return of the old name of Flintshire and the boost to community councils. However, what guarantees are being given for the job security of tens of thousands of worried council employees, not least in the district of Alyn and Deeside and Clwyd, and of Delyn and Wrexham Maelor? Will the huge cost of the reform come from the Treasury or the right hon. Gentleman's own budget—£150 million is a lot of money?

The deep flaw in the proposals is that they do not refer to the unaccountable quangos. The right hon. Gentleman is guaranteeing more of the same—which is the governor general's style—but he has not tackled the problem of unaccountable bodies in Wales.

Mr. Hunt: As I understand it, under the procedures of the House, when the Government publish a White Paper, they come to the House and make a statement about it, making the White Paper available when the statement is made. Therefore, I am merely following existing procedures. There will be an opportunity to debate the proposals next Monday in Cardiff at the historic first meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee.

I welcome what the hon. Gentleman said about Wrexham and Flintshire, and the establishment of the new county of Denbighshire.

I have given a reassurance that the vast majority of staff will transfer from one authority to the new authority, and that the new authorities will be responsible for the full range of local authority services. I hope that that shows the job security that must exist, particularly when I have also announced today—notwithstanding the background—the establishment of the staff commission.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I wish to place on record the grateful thanks of the people of the Vale of Glamorgan to my right hon. Friend. They will be relieved not to have to face the threat of being swallowed up by Cardiff. I feel sure that the proposal to extend the vale slightly to the west and to take in some villages that form a natural part of it will be welcomed. I thank my right hon. Friend for that.

Mr. Hunt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has campaigned vigorously for the Vale of Glamorgan unitary authority. I have listened carefully to his points, and I am pleased to be able to announce what we are publishing today in the White Paper.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The Secretary of State's estimate of cost savings will prove false. All we will get from this local government reorganisation is large and unnecessary additional expenditure, which will arise not because of irresponsibility in local government but because of the ineffectuality of the right hon. Gentleman's proposals, which he intends to put into effect.

The maxim set down in the White Paper—that local government is government for local people by local people—is indeed to be strongly commended, but it is negated by everything the Government have done to local government by centralising power and reducing resources.

In rehearsal for future arguments that we shall doubtless have, may I point out that, although I have great affection and respect for the community of Caerphilly, that name has little if anything in common with Markham, Blackwood, Abercarn, Newbridge, Ynysddu and Pontllanfraith? Whatever else is changed after the White Paper, that name will be.

Mr. Hunt: I am not sure what ineffectuality means in that context. The move from 37 district councils and eight county councils to 21 new unitary authorities, without the overlapping and duplication of the central management unit, combined with ensuring that the full range of services continues, will reassure those working in local government and will mean that the proposals will be highly effective. I strongly believe in the new unitary authorities.

As for the name or title, as far as we are concerned these are suggested names and titles. It will be up to the House when the legislation proceeds to suggest others. I think that the right hon. Gentleman suggested about 12 names for the new authorities. If he would concentrate on one and slip it to me in public or private, I guarantee that I will carefully consider it.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): My right hon. Friend's announcement may be greeted in Powys county hall, where I know morale has been badly hit by the process of consultation over local government reorganisation, but it will be greeted with dismay in the counties of Breconshire and Radnorshire. I endorse the remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) in this regard.

My right hon. Friend is well aware that representations have been made to him by the district council of Brecknock, by Radnorshire district council and by representatives of the community of Ystradgynlais, where more than 5,000 people signed the petition which I had the privilege of presenting——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must have questions from hon. Members, or I shall have to ask them to resume their seats.

Mr. Evans: I ask my right hon. Friend to consider these points and urge him to reconsider his proposals for Powys.

Mr. Hunt: I recognise the deep and strongly held feelings that my hon. Friend and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery have expressed. This has been one of the most difficult areas of the consultation which, as my hon. Friend will know, ranged widely, through the Welsh consultative council on local government and the various sub-groups established to look at services. We are proposing authorities with the full range of services. I am

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certainly aware of my hon. Friend's point, and I should like now to go a little further than I did in answer to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery.

The flexible approach to internal management which I outlined in the document will permit the establishment of sub-groups—area committees for administration—which could be concerned with local authority matters in defined geographical units. I shall certainly press the new Powys authority to establish a committee for each of the historic counties of Montgomeryshire, Breconshire and Radnorshire so as to maintain the political identity of the traditional counties within Powys. For the people of Powys it is important to ensure that local authority services are of the highest possible quality. I certainly intend that they should be.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): First, how will the Secretary of State exercise great care to ensure that the powers that he gives community councils will not be so vast that they will be greater than the powers of the new unitary authorities put together? Secondly, how will he ensure that the development plans that he mentions in his report will be in place so that the many Welsh local authorities that still do not have local plans ready will respond in the appropriate way? Thirdly, how will he improve his Department's planning procedures so that when his Department calls in applications such as that for the Oystermouth bus station in Swansea it will have the courtesy to inform the Member of Parliament for that constituency, me, and an objector that a public inquiry will take place? Unless he gets his act together, God help us.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman will understand if I do not comment on the planning matters mentioned in the final part of his question. He raised the important matter of the role of community councils. Chapter 7 shows that the Government propose a system in which community councils will act increasingly in partnership with the unitary authorities, although through an enhanced representational role. I shall bear in mind what the hon. Gentleman said. I was a little sad that he did not welcome the establishment of the new city and county of Swansea. I hope that I can carry him with me in establishing that new authority.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): My right hon. Friend will be aware—*[Interruption.]* The House will be aware that I represent a United Kingdom seat and that —*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is a Member of the House and has every right to put a question.

Mr. Duncan: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the historic parallels that can be drawn between Radnorshire, Montgomeryshire and the county of Rutland. Will he not admit that a truly Conservative reform should allow almost inexplicable diversity in the size and structure of administrative units? Will he not admit that his announcement imposes a rather arbitrary uniformity on the structure of local government? Would he admit that he might have got his answer about sub-groups the wrong way round and that it is better to have small units combining where they need to rather than larger units forming these rather peculiar sub-groups? Can he confirm that his announcement about the size of unitary authorities in no way creates a precedent for the size of any unitary authority that may be created in England?

Mr. Hunt: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend's final point. Wales will lead the way in demonstrating how to establish the new unitary authorities, but I recognise that there is no read-across into the reform of local government in England.

I say to my hon. Friend, and also to my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), that it is important to ensure that the new unitary authorities can deliver the full range of local authority services. Such services include dealing with children at risk and some aspects of community care, which require a high degree of specialisation. I want to create a structure in which all the new unitary authorities can deliver those services.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I welcome the fact that a statement of some kind has been made at long last, recognising, as I think we all do, that the morale of many tens of thousands of people in local government in Wales has been dealt a severe blow during the past two years of waiting.

I am somewhat bemused at the variation between £65 million and £150 million as the proposed cost of instituting this so-called reform. Given that variation, I fail to understand how the Secretary of State can be confident that any money will be saved. I shall now refer briefly to two other matters——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members are being unfair; they have now entered into a debate, rather than asking direct questions. Unless questions and answers are brisker, I shall not be able to call many more hon. Members.

Mr. Llwyd: I shall be simple and succinct, Madam Speaker. I have two points but I shall be brief.

Aberconwy borough council is to join with the Colwyn borough council. The Secretary of State has said, and it is also set out in the body of the paper, that due consideration has been given to links—local, community and geographical. That is surely not so in this case. The true intrinsic Welsh people of the valley will be ground out of sight in the borough of Colwyn.

Secondly, will the Secretary of State be pleased with himself, having effectively done away with a county that has existed since the 13th century—Meirionnydd?

Mr. Hunt: Since the original announcement that we were looking at ways to introduce unitary authorities, I have spent the time wisely in the Wales consultative council on local government with the representatives of local government, who kindly agreed to setting up a whole range of sub-groups to consider all the different services. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think that, while we await the proper deliberation of those sub-groups, we have a White Paper that sets out the way in which those services can be provided. It was wise to spend that amount of time doing that.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, we are following on from the reorganisation of 1974 and I hope and believe that we are setting up authorities that will last for many years to come. On the other point, I shall be asking the boundary commission for local government to go into a number of areas the length and breadth of Wales to look at the situation on the ground.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): After reading the crazy proposals for a unitary authority based on Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr Tydfil and the community areas of Rhymney, Daren valley and New Tredegar, will the Secretary of State confirm that today is St. David's day and not April fool's day?

Will the right hon. Gentleman elaborate on the community interest between Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr? Given the reference to good communication, will he accept my challenge and come with me on Monday morning to Swffryd and then from Swffryd to Merthyr on public transport? He can then explain to me how the White Paper will meet the need for good communications.

Mr. Hunt: Others put a different view from that which the hon. Gentleman has expressed. I believe that the Heads of the Valleys unitary authority will not only bring together the areas he has mentioned, but will be a satisfactory body, delivering local services at a high level of quality and value for money for the council tax payer.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): How can we welcome the proposals for a reorganisation of local government when the Minister has been so busy taking away the powers of local authorities? For example, Newport borough council unanimously rejected the proposal of Browning Ferris for a waste disposal plant in Newport and it was fully backed by the people of Newport who are concerned about the hazards involved and the criminal record of that American company. Far from reorganising local government, he should take heed of the words of Max Boyce and put the tools on the bar.

Mr. Hunt: While everybody tries to work out the significance of the hon. Gentleman's final comment—I shall award a small prize to the person who can explain it to me in detail—let me make it clear that I wish that the hon. Gentleman would think again and welcome the new unitary authority of Newport. Newport is one of the most important towns in Wales and will readily justify the new unitary authority of Newport.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): It is clear from the Government proposals that the number of local authority elected representatives in Wales will be reduced drastically at a time when the number of unelected representatives running quangos is increasing day by day. Will the Secretary of State give us an assurance—we shall, of course, be scrutinising the proposals set out in the White Paper in the weeks ahead—that the number of councillors per unitary authority will represent an efficient and democratic method of running local government?

Mr. Hunt: I should like to nail the point about redundancies straight away. There has been a range of suggestions from the counties and districts about the number of people working in local government. I envisage —the White Paper makes it clear that what I am about to say will be the case—that the majority of people working in local government will transfer from the former authority to the new authority.

The number of councillors and matters of internal management are dealt with in the White Paper, which maps out the way ahead. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will understand that I am giving power to certain authorities—I take up his point about internal management—to pioneer new forms of management methods. The legislation will deal with the numbers of councillors and the size of wards, and give power to local authorities to continue to pioneer new methods of delivering local services.

Points of Order

4.16 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As I understand it, one of the purposes of the House is to try to raise the plight of those in need such as pensioners on small incomes who are suffering greatly during the present cold spell because cold weather payments have not yet been triggered.

I ask you, Madam Speaker, to give careful consideration to the making of applications under Standing Order No. 20. I understand that it is necessary for you to give permission, irrespective of the outcome of any such application, before an application can be made on the Floor of the House.

On 6 February 1991, as you will see from the *Official Report*, I received permission from your predecessor to make an application under Standing Order No. 20 on cold weather payments. I have already stated that, in my opinion, one of our jobs as Members is to raise the plight of those in need; it is unfortunate if we are denied the opportunity to do so. The rights of Back-Bench Members, Parliament by Parliament——

Madam Speaker: Order. What is the point of order?

Mr. Winnick: It is whether you, Madam Speaker, will reconsider the position of Back-Bench Members. It is extremely difficult for us to make any applications to you on the Floor of the House, which means that our rights are being undermined and eroded, but through no fault of yours, Madam Speaker. A policy has been established, and I hope that you will reverse it. If not, it seems that, Parliament by Parliament, the rights of Back-Bench Members will be undermined and eroded, which will be extremely unfortunate.

Madam Speaker: I take great pains to uphold the rights of Back-Bench Members. I shall consider carefully, as I always do, any Standing Order 20 applications. I shall weigh them extremely seriously.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Was it not possible for you to allow questions on the statement to run on? It was a statement of considerable significance to every Member representing a Welsh constituency. The annual Welsh day debate is about to take place, and we would have been only robbing ourselves of time in that debate if questions had been allowed to continue. Could not you have extended the time, Madam Speaker, to allow detailed questions to be asked by every Member representing a Welsh constituency who wished to do so?

Madam Speaker: The thought was in my mind. As the House knows, I allowed the statement and questions on it to continue for three quarters of an hour. I was concerned at the length of questions and answers. I timed the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), and the Secretary of State on the first question and answer exchange and they took 20 minutes. If all the questions and answers had been more brisk, I would have been able to call more Back-Bench Members, which was what I intended to do. I noted that both the hon. Member and the right hon. Gentleman acknowledged that the matter would be debated by the Welsh Grand Committee in the foreseeable future. We are also, as the hon. Gentleman said, about to have a wide-ranging debate on the Adjournment on Welsh affairs.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I raised a point of order last Wednesday, when I criticised the Secretary of State for the Environment for not notifying me that my question had been linked with another question. I have now established that, in fact, a message was sent from the Department of the Environment to me, via our message board. That message did not reach me in time, for reasons that are not at all clear.

I am aware that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) said earlier, there are serious communication problems among Government Departments, Ministers and hon. Members. I want to set the record straight and to say that on this occasion there is no criticism of the parliamentary branch and officials of the Department of the Environment.

Madam Speaker: I am delighted to hear, for once, that everyone lived happily ever after.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, which has a dual purpose. The first is to ensure that those viewing our proceedings will know that I was present when questions were asked on the statement about the proposed local government reorganisation, even though I was not called. The second purpose—which is the point of order for you, Madam Speaker—involves the safeguarding of the rights of Back Benchers.

I was fortunate to draw No. 3 in the ballot for private Members' Bills immediately following the election, which meant that I should have been able quickly to put my Shops (Amendment) Bill before the House for Second Reading. However, it was eight months before it received a Second Reading, on 22 January, when it was agreed by a majority in the House. Nevertheless, it has been another six weeks before my Bill goes into Committee on Wednesday.

Applications were made last week for the Bill's proceedings to be televised and that was agreed on Friday. Within a matter of hours, I was told that they would not be televised. Since then, the Committee has been informed on four occasions that there has been a room change.

I believe that that matter requires investigation, Madam Speaker. We all subscribe to the ballot process and, if we come within the first 20 places, we expect to get our Bill through at least some of its stages. If we are in the first 10 places, we expect to get our Bills considerably further. I now understand that, even though I was No. 3 in the ballot, and even if my Bill took only one day in Committee on Wednesday—as it amends the Shops Act 1950, it is a sizeable Bill—no spot would be made available for its Report stage between now and July.

As 173 hon. Members voted in favour of my Bill on 22 January, and as you, Madam Speaker, look after the interests of Back Benchers, I hope that you will ensure that there is a thorough investigation of the reasons why no spot is available. My supporters need to be satisfied with the explanation.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's point about the televising of his Bill's proceedings in Committee and

the various room changes are administrative matters. However, I take seriously what he has said and, if he will leave the matter with me, I shall consider it.

Welsh Affairs

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

4.23 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. David Hunt): This St. David day's debate is the first of the new Parliament and this year it also takes place on our national day. That makes it an especially appropriate day on which to debate our traditional emphasis on the future opportunities for Wales. Of course, we have spent some time discussing my proposals for the reform of local government in Wales and we shall have a further opportunity to do so again at next week's Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Some of us are amazed at the Secretary of State's gall and barefaced cheek in introducing local government reorganisation without showing any humility and acknowledging that the present system was established by a Conservative Government. I hope that the Secretary of State will acknowledge in his speech the effect of a Conservative Government on local government in Wales—and perhaps he will give a history lesson to his latter-day colleague, the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), who, it seems, does not know the history of the county of Gwent and of its establishment by a Conservative Government.

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) has made me aware on many occasions of his profound knowledge of history and has used historical analysis often to justify the creation of the county of Monmouthshire. I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will use today's debate to concentrate on other matters, bearing in mind the fact that we will have an opportunity next week to discuss local government. I shall, of course, seek to address the hon. Gentleman's point in next week's debate.

I am proud that Wales is pioneering local government reform in the United Kingdom. These debates are traditionally wide ranging and my hon. Friends and I look forward to addressing a range of important issues affecting policies in Wales, including agriculture and rural affairs; tourism and inward investment; health, education and housing; the government of Wales; and our roads and railways.

Perhaps the most important issue of all is how the Welsh economy and the Welsh environment can be improved in years to come. Many right hon. and hon. Members will seek to contribute to the debate, so I will mention some of those matters only in passing.

My own priority for the future is to continue to build a diverse and strong economic base for Wales.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): I remind the Secretary of State of the problems of the Welsh steel industry and of the dumping of east European steel in western Europe and the imposition by President Clinton of tariffs. Does the right hon. Gentleman raise the problems of British Steel in the Cabinet? Does he agree that Britain and Wales in particular must not lose even one tonne of steel-making capacity, because the industry is too important for that to happen?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are many worrying developments, including those that he

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mentioned. We must have effective anti-dumping measures. As to world trade, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that Wales will prosper, but only if there is full, fair and free trade. I want the Uruguay round brought to an early conclusion and a new GATT that will do much to stimulate world trade and perhaps make unnecessary many of the measures being contemplated or announced by some Governments. Steel is a vital core industry for Wales and it is a matter of pride for me that although many jobs have been lost in the industry, its productivity and output have increased enormously. It is a matter of pride for everyone in the industry that it is one of the most competitive in the world. However, the hon. Gentleman is right to emphasise that it is only possible for our competitive industry to prosper if we have full, fair and free trade.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Will the Secretary of State address his failure to secure objective 1 status for Wales? It was granted to the Scottish highlands and to certain parts of England, such as Merseyside, but Wales has failed in that respect. If we do not secure the maximum possible assistance from the European Community, we will be in danger of missing out on opportunities that are needed in all parts of Wales.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman will know that the way in which to proceed is determined under the nomenclature of units of territorial statistics, affectionately known as NUTS. Under that category, it was only possible for us to put forward Dyfed, Gwynedd, Powys and Clwyd as a single region.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Not Gwynedd.

Mr. Hunt: No, I must correct the hon. Gentleman: it was Dyfed, Gwynedd, Powys and Clwyd. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry, the hon. Gentleman is wrong.

Under the territorial distinction, it is possible only for us to see the full region as such. The regionalisation announced by the European Community does not include Dyfed, Gwynedd, Powys and Clwyd, which is a matter of regret. I stress the importance that we give to securing objective 1 status for rural Wales.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): As my right hon. Friend will know, the President of the Board of Trade has said that, although the Commissioner has not included rural Wales, he intends to put forward the argument for rural Wales at the Council of Ministers' meeting.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman is out of order: he is speaking from the aisle.

Mr. Evans: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): If all faults were as small as that, this place would be better run.

Mr. Evans: Let me return to the important point that I was making in regard to objective 1 status. My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has made it clear that rural Wales is still part of his ambitions in terms of obtaining objective 1 status. Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State invite Opposition Members to communicate with the European Commission and Mr. Bruce Millan—who used to be a parliamentary colleague of theirs—and urge Mr. Millan to include rural Wales with Merseyside and the highlands and islands of Scotland?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. The final decision rests with the Council of Ministers, in the context of the review of the structural funds regulations. I shall certainly continue to press the case for rural Wales. Let me add that, although it is not possible on the NUTS II geographical basis, I very much want the needs of mid-Glamorgan, in industrial south Wales, to be recognised as deserving special treatment. We shall continue to press for that.

As I have said, it is always a pressing responsibility in Wales to forge policies that bring about sustainable prosperity for the future. Difficult times emphasise fundamental strengths and there have been many developments in recent years to support our confidence in the underlying prospects for the Welsh economy, but we still have some way to go.

My message to Wales is that the portents are good. I believe that our economic theme in 1993 must be "go for growth". The current signs are encouraging: for the first time since the 1920s, unemployment in Wales is now below the United Kingdom average—although it is still rising and is still too high. Productivity has risen by almost 26 per cent. since 1985, compared with a United Kingdom rise of only 11 per cent. Overall output has increased by over 18 per cent. since 1985, compared with a United Kingdom increase of some 7 per cent. During the 1980s, Wales gained, on average, about 1,500 net new businesses a year, taking the total of VAT-registered businesses from about 70,000 to more than 86,000.

Of course, we must do more. I acknowledge that, to build on those successes, we need to emphasise clearly the industrial and economic strategy for the next few years. Let me list the matters that I believe need to be addressed.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): The Secretary of State says that he wants to go for growth and that the portents are good. I hope that he is right.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that he is in favour of further reductions in interest rates, which are an essential step towards the stimulation of confidence in the economy, in Wales and elsewhere in the United Kingdom? Will he also confirm that he will resist all cuts in public expenditure, in either capital or revenue accounts? Wales, like the rest of the United Kingdom, needs everything that it can get if we are to grow out of the prolonged recession brought about by the Government's policies.

Mr. Hunt: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I have never been other than a critic of the economic policies that he espoused at the last general election. His question emphasised his party's unfitness to manage the economy. He knows that it is wrong for the Government to give an indication on interest rates. Our interest rates are at their lowest for years—6 per cent. We do not believe that Government should spend their way out of recession. We must ensure that our public expenditure programmes are relevant and that increasing emphasis is placed on capital, as it was in the autumn statement. I am delighted, therefore, to say that in the coming year Wales will have a record capital programme of £1·5 billion. That represents a good investment for the future.

Secondly, we must do all that we can to sustain or even improve our inward investment record, which is second to

none. Thirdly, we must press on with a concerted export drive and I have announced a range of measures that will achieve that. Fourthly, we must continue to invest in the success of Source Wales to maximise the advantage that we take of the new local markets that are created by our foreign investors. I shall do my best to ensure that we not only achieve record levels of inward investment but that we knock on the door of every inward investor to stress the quality of goods and services in Wales under the Source Wales programme.

We must emphasise at every turn the need for Welsh companies to adopt a total quality strategy and to pursue excellence in all that they do. They will then win those much-valued orders.

We must take full advantage of the new co-ordination that is made possible by the transfer of responsibility for training and, from 1 April, for the University of Wales from Whitehall to Wales to ensure a properly co-ordinated training, education and enterprise department. We have led the way in the United Kingdom by establishing such a department in the Welsh Office.

I want us to continue to promote the highest standards of management within companies in Wales. I want us to seek, through the higher education sector and our most forward-looking companies, innovation and research of the highest possible standards. We want to ensure that our co-ordinated approach to policy in the valleys makes the most of the initiative from the people of the valleys, fostering independence, not dependence. I know that many ideas have been advanced about how we should take this approach further and I shall refer to them in a moment.

We must ensure—this is my tenth point—that the new local councils that I announced today do everything possible to co-ordinate our approach to economic needs in Wales, not least by bringing new and relevant ideas from community level to the Welsh economic council.

Those are 10 key pointers for future policy, but, as everyone knows, the Government do not have all the answers. They are primarily a consumer of wealth, not a creator of it, and initiatives for the long-term success of our people must come from the people themselves. Our future policies must therefore have a far more decentralised flavour. We must encourage local initiatives and not swamp them with the dirigiste ideas that are still frequently abroad on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Roy Hughes: At my interview session last Saturday morning, a constituent told me that he had heard that a large concern in Newport, which employs more than 250 people, is considering its position in the town as a result of the Secretary of State's decision to authorise a waste disposal plant. Does not that have serious implications for employment in the town? What is the Secretary of State going to do about it? Let us have some straight answers.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman asks about planning. It is not for me to comment beyond the decision that I have reached. Of course, I took all matters into account. He should follow the example of many of his colleagues in making me aware of difficulties in any companies in Wales and I hope that he will let me have full details of the case that he cited.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The Secretary of State has made 10 points, but I wonder whether he is going to reach the eleventh, which is that there must be good transport links to and from the Principality. Is he aware of the alarming statement by the general manager of the west coast main line that the line will be closed in six years' time and that, if it is not, there will be a catastrophe because British Rail desperately needs £400 million for investment in track and infrastructure? There is a danger that the high speed train through services to north Wales will not continue beyond 1994, unless the Secretary of State assures us to the contrary. Many other hon. Members representing north Wales are extremely worried, so will he meet an all-party deputation to see what can be done to ensure that these vital services continue to north Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I have been given differing reports of the meeting, which I did not attend. I have not seen the alleged source of the rumour, said to be an internal British Rail document. I checked with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and nor has he seen it. Therefore, we have no reason to believe that it is anything other than scaremongering. That is not something that I have heard from the hon. Gentleman in the past and I hope that he will join me in making it clear that there is no substance to what has been said.

However, I understand that British Rail intends soon to start renewing the infrastructure of the west coast main line. The precise timing will be decided in the spring, when British Rail has decided on its next corporate plan. It is already carrying out a programme to upgrade the north Wales coast main line. I have heard from Sir Bob Reid the extent of those plans about which I am very pleased.

The future of the north Wales coast main line is important for the area. I was delighted to have held the post of Secretary of State for Wales when the first 125 left Euston heading for north Wales and Holyhead. That was a very good move, but I now want more traffic on that route. The introduction of the 125 cut the journey time substantially and offers a very good service.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): Was the right hon. Gentleman satisfied to be the Secretary of State for Wales who presided over the period when British Rail took Aberystwyth off the main line and relegated the Birmingham-Aberystwyth line to what amounts to a milk train route, which is of no use to any business person and of little use to people who work at the university of Aberystwyth? Is not it a disgraceful apology for a railway line? Is he generally satisfied with British Rail's performance in Wales?

Mr. Hunt: I have raised the question of the mid-Wales routes with Sir Bob Reid, but, as we always say at the Dispatch Box, it is a matter for British Rail. There are good local services through to Aberystwyth, although I recognise that there are strong feelings locally which the hon. and learned Gentleman expresses and which he will no doubt also express to British Rail.

I praise the record of Wales in attracting inward investment and all those who help to ensure that we continue to break new records. I have calculated that, since April 1983, there have been more than 1,000 inward investment projects in Wales and 208 new projects in the last financial year alone, promising 16,000 jobs. That is a pretty good record against the present background of world recession.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): We have heard those figures about inward investment many times, but the

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subject about which the Welsh Office never speaks and on which there is no record is outward divestment, an equally ugly phrase. It is the number of quality jobs which are siphoned out of my constituency and others to Malaysia, France and dozens of other countries. The Government's claim about inward investment is like filling up the bath —the taps are running and one can measure the water going in, but one forgets that the plug is out and that the water is draining away. When will the Secretary of State keep a record and report to the House the number of jobs that are lost to Wales?

Mr. Hunt: The statistic is there. The hon. Gentleman has only to consider manufacturing output. Is not it a fact that, despite the rundown in certain key industries, manufacturing output has increased over the past 14 years? Yes, it is a fact. It has increased by more than 25 per cent. since 1979.

One of the examples that I was going to use to stress that Wales is now internationally the first option for new projects and expansion is Newport Wafer Fab which, as the hon. Gentleman knows, is promising 280 jobs. I could give many other examples.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): To help the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), will my right hon. Friend tell the House how many of the plants and factories which have opened in Wales since 1979 are still in operation and still providing employment?

Mr. Hunt: It is staggering that 803 new manufacturing plants that have opened in Wales since 1979 are still in production. My hon. Friend is right to stress their importance. [HON. MEMBERS:"A planted question".] That is not so. If the hon. Gentleman had read further down the Order Paper, he would have seen that my hon. Friend's question was tabled but not called. However, my hon. Friend has found a good way of ensuring that the House knew my answer.

The Government have not only encouraged international partnerships and investment. Since January 1992 —I stress this figure because it has increased since I last mentioned it—210 offers of regional selective assistance have been accepted by new and developing businesses in Wales. That involves a contribution from the taxpayer of £82 million, making a total investment of £543 million, involving 14,200 jobs, many of which are still to come.

I mentioned Newport Wafer Fab——

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: No, the hon. Gentleman has had his opportunity. Other examples include Robertson Associates and Treforest with 195 jobs, the Marshall Food Group at Sandy Croft with a further 313, Flexonics Automotive at Crumlin promising 260 jobs, Amcor Packaging at Mold with 150, and Tillery Valley foods at Abertillery with a further 111. I am pleased to be able to announce further job projects.

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: Will the hon. Gentleman please listen to further good news, which I am happy to announce, including the fact——

Mr. Flynn *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been here long enough to know that if the Secretary of State, or any other hon. Member who has the floor, does not give way, he must resume his seat.

Mr. Hunt: I am pleased to confirm what I believe the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) already knows. Lucas-SEI has already created more than 150 jobs at its Neath facility, which only started operations three months ago, and I am today announcing another four job projects.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on the list of job opportunities in the hundreds which he has produced for parts of Wales. However, I am a little disturbed by the possibility that the debate may suggest that Wales is some sort of independent economic and industrial unit. Self-evidently, it is not.

At the risk of boring repetition, I point out that, although my right hon. Friend has talked about 200 jobs here and 300 jobs there, there is the probability—the almost certainty—that if consent is given under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 for a power station at Connah's Quay, 4,000 jobs will be created. I am sad to say—no, it is not sad from my point of view—that some of those jobs would go to Englishmen. I was baptised in Portmadoc, so I believe that I have some right to speak on these matters. Will my right hon. Friend press the Department of Trade and Industry to give a decision about the 4,000 jobs and about the other jobs to come for the gas industry in north Wales and in what I hope will soon become Cheshire again?

Mr. Hunt: Were it not for the fact that I should very much like to continue as Secretary of State for Wales for many years to come, I should admit that my hon. Friend has just laid impeccable credentials. In all the many years during which I have served the adjoining constituency, I have been unaware of his Welsh background and of his Welsh baptism.

My hon. Friend will recognise, because he has been fighting hard for the project, that under section 36 of the 1989 Act, it is very much a matter for my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. As I said earlier, I shall ensure that I bring my hon. Friend's remarks to his attention.

To promote further success, last year I published proposals to set up a Welsh economic council. The responses, as I said, have been positive and I shall announce my final proposals shortly. The council will be an important forum for discussing positively wealth and job creation.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is not there a danger of making a quango of the quangos in that council? Is not there a danger of the Secretary of State debasing the election principle? Does he rule out, as a matter of principle, having an all-Wales elected body from the new local authority units, possibly as a step on the way to a proper elected assembly?

Mr. Hunt: There are only three more executive agencies than there were in 1979. I do not want the hon. Gentleman to run away with the idea that many more such bodies have been created. Most of the bodies are advisory bodies. I was dealing with the Welsh economic council, which, as the hon. Gentleman may recall, was an idea put to me by the Welsh Association of District Councils. I assure the

hon. Gentleman that when the Welsh economic council is announced, it will be seen to contain strong representation from the local authorities.

I know that the hon. Gentleman feels strongly that there should be a different forum—a parliament or an assembly for Wales. I hope that he will accept that we have a strong difference of opinion on that matter.

Following the autumn statement, I announced that expenditure by the Welsh Development Agency would reach a new record level. Next year, its expenditure will increase by almost £5 million to £171·4 million. I am delighted to announce today that, as a result of the increase, I have just approved a £50 million programme of expenditure by the agency on property development in the coming year. The WDA will continue to ensure that we can meet the property needs of inward investors and of the local business community.

The new programme will continue to emphasise land assembly, bespoke building and the stimulation of private sector involvement in the Welsh industrial property market. The WDA will also have a massive £66 million next year to upgrade the environment and to promote economic activity through the biggest land reclamation programme in Europe. The agency will bring almost 1,500 acres of derelict, neglected and unsightly land into productive use and there are many exciting projects.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether the WDA will spend any money on cleaning up the polluted rivers and streams of Wales? That pollution has been caused by former and, possibly, present owners of mineral rights walking away from their responsibilities when mines have been closed. It is a national disgrace that coal owners, for example, once the coal mines have been abandoned, can wash their hands completely of their responsibilities and leave the rivers and streams devoid of life as the ferruginous material mixes with the water and kills the fish and wildlife there.

Mr. Hunt: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that 94 per cent. of the rivers in Wales are of reasonable or fair quality. We are talking about particular instances. The WDA will spend about £32 million in the coming year on land reclamation which could include measures to prevent further pollution. Other schemes are in progress to achieve the end that he and I want—a continuing improvement in the quality of our rivers.

The presence among inward investors of strong exporting companies has enhanced the Welsh contribution to the United Kingdom balance of payments. I want overseas markets to be exploited to the full. That is why I have launched a new export drive to encourage small businesses in particular, which are not normally involved in export trade, to seek opportunities overseas. We shall move from an average of three export missions a year to 24 missions over the next three years. I have already announced measures to help those participating in the missions with fares and with expenses.

The direct jobs created by home-grown and inward investment are just the start. The spin-off opportunities are enormous. We dealt with that earlier today when we talked about the Source Wales programme. Since January 1992, the programme has been instrumental in securing £6·1 million of immediate business for Welsh small and medium enterprises. The longer-term benefits will be even greater. Altogether, 1,760 Welsh businesses have been contacted to form part of the south Wales database.

I have discussed with the chairman of the WDA, Dr. Gwyn Jones, how we can ensure that some of our more important investors, such as British Airways, Bosch and Toyota, have direct links with the programme. I am pleased to say that an individual has been seconded by the WDA to each of those three major companies to ensure that more goods and services are supplied by Welsh businesses.

A key development came last year with the establishment of the training, education and enterprise department to give even greater coherence to our investment in the skills and enterprise of the people of Wales. The new department will build on the achievements of the network of seven training and enterprise councils which were established in Wales in April 1991. We have already pioneered the one-step shop approach to ensure that our businesses have immediate access to the information they need, especially if they are responding with new projects and new ideas.

Reforms in the further education sector from 1 April will mean that further education institutions will be able to respond more easily to the needs of students, of employers and of local communities. I was pleased to confirm the provision of £143 million for further education in Wales next year, which will allow a substantial increase in student numbers.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): It is all very well for the Secretary of State to present us with fine words on training and enterprise. As he knows, the reality is that training and enterprise councils have had their places, budgets and opportunities savagely cut in recent years. There is no hope of many thousands of youngsters in Wales either getting on a decent training scheme or getting a decent job at the end of it.

Mr. Hunt: I disagree with the hon. Gentleman. The amount spent by training and enterprise councils in the present year is more than £100 million. I have been told that the likely outturn figure is £102 million. That compares with the provision that I am making in the Budget with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for training and enterprise councils to have about £106 million to spend in the coming financial year.

For the first time ever, we will have responsibility for funding the whole higher education sector in Wales. The council will receive more than £157 million for funding in 1993-94. I believe that resources for that year will increase by 9·9 per cent. in cash over 1992-93, including an additional £2·9 million to raise the quality of research.

We need the right environment and infrastructure to sustain business and individuals and promote growth. The programme for the valleys, which was launched nearly five years ago by my predecessor—now Lord Walker—is an outstanding example of effective action to regenerate an urban area. The initial three-year programme was extended for a further two years. We reach the end of that on 31 March this year.

The programme for the valleys is unique in bringing to bear the full range of Government policies on the problems and challenges of a single area. We can take pride in what has been achieved. In a difficult economic period, the valleys have outperformed the Welsh economy and the

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United Kingdom economy as a whole. It used to be the case that when recession hit the United Kingdom, the valleys would be much worse off.

If the valleys had simply followed the United Kingdom trend since 1988, their unemployment rate would be more than 20 per cent. higher than it is and more than 10,000 people might not now have jobs as a result. That should not be surprising when we have invested the provision of about £800 million which was announced. We have also created 2·6 million sq ft of industrial floor space. We have cleared more than 2,000 acres of derelict land and levered in £700 million worth of additional private sector investment.

When I say "we", I do not mean simply the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency. I am referring to all the partners in the programme for the valleys, including the local authorities and the people themselves. For all the criticism which we receive from time to time, it is striking that the critics of the programme for the valleys seem to be urging me to do more of the same.

I am immensely encouraged by recent progress in developing local strategies to tackle the needs of valleys towns and creating partnerships to implement those strategies. They include joint ventures between the Welsh Development Agency and local councils and community initiatives under the community revival strategies. There is the potential for partnerships with the training and enterprise councils, the Welsh Development Agency, the private sector, local enterprise agencies and the various voluntary bodies as well as local authorities.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): When the Secretary of State referred to the uniqueness of the valleys initiative, was he referring to the University of Wales report which shows that, after substantial investigation, it could not see an additional one penny of new public investment into the valleys?

Mr. Hunt: Rather than picking some of the remarks out of context, I would ask the hon. Gentleman to examine the whole report, which welcomed what the programme has done for the valleys.

Because I have been encouraged by what has happened so far—I commend my predecessor for his initiative and, indeed, another predecessor, now Lord Crickhowell, for some of the programmes that he initiated—I am announcing today that there will be a new five-year programme for the valleys which will build on the success of the original programme and provide a framework to give co-ordinated support to local strategies.

The new programme will need a clear statement of direction and I propose to give it just that. First, I want the programme to create long-term sustainable employment of improved quality; secondly, I want to make that employment accessible to all people through education, training and transport facilities; thirdly, I want the programme to support and strengthen local communities; fourthly, I want to improve and maintain the environment both as an attraction to business and tourism, but especially for the benefit of the people of the valleys; fifthly, I want to see national health service resources targeted more effectively in the valleys to improve further the health of local people; and sixthly, I want to maximise the extent to which those aims are achieved by local people taking the lead in partnership with central and local government and the private and voluntary sectors.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for financing projects in the valleys. Why is there still a block on the RECHAR money? We desperately need the additional investment. It is new European money. About £20 million a year has been earmarked for the rundown coal and steel areas. Why is there still a problem with releasing those funds?

Mr. Hunt: I am not aware of the problem. At my next meeting with the Commissioner, Bruce Millan, I shall raise the hon. Gentleman's point. As he knows, the European programmes are enormously beneficial to Wales and a genuine addition to what we might otherwise be able to do. He will also know from the departmental report that I am providing money in the coming year to match substantially the grants from the European regional fund.

The majority of the actions initiated under the programme for the valleys will continue under the new programme. Most of all, the new programme must draw on the strengths of the valleys in tackling problems. I want to see some of the creative thinking that has come out of the valleys—for example, on industrial villages and the creation of a valleys forum—taken forward in the context of the new programme. I make that absolutely clear.

I know that many political parties have made their proposals. I am considering the best way to ensure that their ideas are taken forward in the context of the new programme and I am willing to see any hon. Members who wish to discuss that further with me.

Mr. Hain: I am grateful for a second opportunity to ask the Secretary of State a question. I welcome his support for the principle of industrial villages. May I ask him to put flesh on the bones of that announcement, especially the amount of hard cash with which he is willing to back the new initiative? It is clear that the previous valleys initiative programme simply recycled existing funds. We need a massive new injection of investment and jobs which will cost millions of pounds. That money is available in the £300 million which is wasting away financing people on the dole, but which could be recycled into regenerating the valley communities.

Mr. Hunt: I acknowledge that the proposal has come from the hon. Gentleman, among others. I welcome the chance to put flesh on his bones and the bones of his proposal and I shall be working hard to do just that.

It is always a question of resources. I argue within the context of government for an appropriate level of resources for Wales. Equally, I hope that the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) will acknowledge that it is necessary to get the structure of the programme right—that is what I will seek to do—and then to justify the resources which can be applied in the direction of the valleys.

The hon. Gentleman will also recognise that over the five-year period provision was made for a figure of £800 million, which considerably exceeds the level of programme which would otherwise have been implemented in the valleys area.

Mr. Kinnock: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for giving way, especially as it is the second opportunity that he has given me. He listed his six objectives for what he describes as his further initiative. Am I wrong in thinking

that he did not mention housing in the list, even though it is a comprehensive statement of desirable purposes in many respects?

Given the great housing need of many families, especially young people, in the valley communities and the fact that, by building and improving dwellings for families, he would be making a real attack on unemployment in the valleys, does not he think that priority should be given to housing? In common with the rest of Wales, unemployment in the valleys has increased by 67 per cent. in the time that he has been the Secretary of State.

Mr. Hunt: The right hon. Gentleman is right, but there are a number of policy areas which I did not mention as such. I was seeking to give a clear direction to the programme which includes a number of areas. Of course, housing is important and that is why a substantial amount of public money is going into the home renovation grants system. That system has done a great deal to improve some homes and houses in the valleys. Of course, it will form an important part of the new programme.

In the next financial year the resources for the WDA's urban development programme will be increased to £13 million—up from £10 million this year. I am increasing the resources available for private sector urban developments through urban investment grant for Wales as a whole from £4·2 million this year to £6·6 million next year. I shall actively promote the take-up of that grant in the valleys. I shall also make available additional resources to launch another round of the community revival strategy competition.

Mr. Rogers: The Secretary of State mentioned putting money into the valley communities and the various structures and organisations that he intends to set up. Would not it be better for him to follow the example of one of his predecessors, who put far more substantial amounts of money into house repair grants than at present? I pay tribute to that Government initiative back in 1982, 1983 and 1984. But after that, the tap was closed. As a result, it is enormously difficult to revitalise our old housing stock.

If the Secretary of State wants to put people back to work, house repair grants would be a quick way of doing it. A great deal of skilled labour such as bricklayers, carpenters and so on is available. Those people could immediately get on with the job of refurbishing our housing stock.

Mr. Hunt: It is good of the hon. Gentleman to acknowledge the validity of the arguments that were rehearsed extensively in the 1983 general election. Under my right hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Sir Wyn Roberts), the Welsh Office spent more in one year on housing repair than the Labour Government spent throughout their five years in office. It is good of the hon. Gentleman to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend. He is right to stress housing repair grants. I was able to provide £80 million of additional moneys to bring the investment up to £143 million in one year for the whole of Wales under the home renovation grant scheme.

Mr. Rogers: I am happy to pay a full tribute to the Minister of State for his efforts back in 1983. I know that some of its significance was due to the fact that an election was approaching. It was odd that the tap was closed the following year. Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking to open the tap of money for repair grants?

Mr. Hunt: If £80 million in one year—not only this year but for the next three years—is not turning on the tap, I do not know what is. I announced an additional £80 million for not only this financial year but the next financial year. So we shall be able to maintain the expenditure.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Hunt: I do not want to speak for much longer because I know that many hon. Gentlemen want to speak. I have a tradition of giving way, but perhaps this time will be the last.

Mr. Ainger: Is the Secretary of State aware that certainly in Preseli, Pembrokeshire and South Pembrokeshire, while the grants available have been increased, there is still an enormous backlog of applications? The applications have been processed by the two district councils, but because funds are not available, people who may have paid their architect hundreds of pounds have to wait up to two years before their grant is completed and they receive the money to pay the architect. It is a serious problem. I have written to the Under-Secretary on the issue.

Mr. Hunt: I have given a high profile to private sector home renovation through special help for councils in Wales since the new grant system was introduced in 1990. I acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman paid tribute to that. By the end of 1992-93, the special help will have amounted to some £660 million. In the next financial year alone, more than £145 million is available for mandatory renovation grants, with more than £26 million for disabled facilities grants, minor works assistance and other grants. I hope that the hon. Gentleman recognises that a great deal of money is being made available. I recognise that in certain parts of Wales a backlog is building up. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I are considering the matter, but we have made available substantial funds.

In response to the point of the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock), I remind the House that in the next financial year the Housing for Wales programme will be at the record level of some £190 million, of which the capital element will be £130 million. I am confident that Housing for Wales will be able to achieve and even exceed its objective of 4,000 new homes this year.

We also have the record capital programme to which I referred earlier. It includes substantial health capital programmes. Two significant developments are the publication last December of "Caring for the Future", the 10-year strategic plan for NHS Wales, and the establishment from 1 April this year of the next 13 NHS trusts. On 1 April the Care in the Community programme will begin. I expect there to be more than 40 GP fund holders in April this year. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said, more patients than ever before are being treated by NHS Wales. That demonstrates the success of health authorities.

I must emphasise another golden thread running through the Government's work in developing services for the people of Wales. It is our commitment to enhancing Welsh culture and developing even greater use of the Welsh language. That commitment is clearly demonstrated by the introduction of the Welsh Language Bill, which received its Third Reading in another place last week. The Bill is wide in scope and ambitious in its goals.

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It establishes the principle that English and Welsh should be dealt with on an equal basis throughout the public sector.

The Welsh Language Board will be established on a statutory basis. It will produce guidelines to illustrate how public bodies should give practical and consistent effect to that principle, subject only to what is appropriate and reasonably practicable.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): Does the Secretary of State recognise that if the Bill is to have any substantial effect, the Welsh Language Board will require substantial resources to produce its guidelines promptly and vet the development programmes, plans and schemes of various bodies? Is he prepared to ensure that the resources are available for that body?

Mr. Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we provide the Welsh Language Board with resources at present. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has always sought to do everything that he can to increase the amount of grant to support the Welsh language. As I said, the Bill will place the board on a statutory footing. It will have wide-ranging advisory powers and its function will be to promote the Welsh language. That duty is deliberately drawn in broad terms to meet the Government's aim of strengthening the position of the Welsh language wherever it is spoken.

However, I shall never tire of emphasising that the Welsh language will ultimately stand or fall in the pubs, shops and homes of Wales, not on the statute book alone. We have done and are doing everything that we can. The conditions are now propitious and the signs throughout Wales are highly encouraging. Our Bill, supported by the good will of the people of Wales, could transform the standing of the Welsh language for generations to come.

To end any uncertainty that there may be about the status that we intend the language to enjoy, part III of the Bill removes legal obstacles to the use of Welsh and legislative provisions which have been construed as giving Welsh a secondary status. That includes repeal of the remaining provisions of the Laws in Wales Acts 1535 and 1542.

Mr. Morgan: No doubt the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts) was Minister of State then.

Mr. Hunt: No, my right hon. Friend was not Minister of State then, although I can imagine why the hon. Gentleman said that.

The Bill joins a range of Welsh language measures that the Government have introduced. It will safeguard and strengthen the position of the Welsh language for a long time to come.

Mr. Rogers: The Secretary of State said that the Bill is designed to enhance the Welsh language, which has a secondary role in some areas of Welsh life. I am not happy with the Bill's proposals, however, because I do not believe that they go far enough. Unless some sort of legislative binding is introduced, the Welsh language will not be used in the various circumstances that the Secretary of State mentioned.

The Welsh language, however, is in a primary position in Wales in relation to certain jobs. I am greatly concerned that 90 per cent. of my constituents are precluded from applying for jobs in the media and other Welsh organisations, such as the Welsh Arts Council, simply because they do not speak Welsh. The only answer is for the Secretary of State to provide more resources for translation and interpretative services so that the people in the valley communities can apply for those jobs that are now exclusively awarded to a small elite in Wales.

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman and his constituents need have no fear; we do not discriminate. The hon. Gentleman will understand that, obviously, for certain jobs Welsh is a requirement, but the vast majority of jobs in the public sector and with other bodies do not insist upon that requirement. The increasing use of translation facilities is a good thing, but it is expensive. One must always bear in mind the priority that one accords to resources. However, the hon. Gentleman raises an important point and I would not seek to undermine it.

I hope that the debate will offer a range of constructive, positive suggestions from all sides of the House. This is an important day for Wales. I hope that it will be a happy St. David's day and that we will hear many innovative and imaginative proposals.

I believe that the background is extremely good for Wales to do what most economic commentators now expect it to do—lead the United Kingdom out of recession. I want everyone in the House to agree with me that that should be our aim and that we should go for growth.

5.21 pm

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): There is no doubt about the desire of the Labour party to ensure that policies take Wales out of recession. The Secretary of State will know that we have put various proposals to the Welsh Office on ways which we believe the valley communities can lead Wales out of the recession and into growth. I am grateful that the right hon. Gentleman's comprehensive speech showed that he has at least read the document that his private office was so desperately anxious to get from me.

Mr. David Hunt: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that I rarely complain, but I read about that document in the press last week and I have been pressing his office to send me a copy ever since. It arrived just a few hours ago with a compliment slip. I welcome it none the less, but I hope that he does not expect me to have read it already.

Mr. Davies: That is funny, because that is precisely the time that I had this afternoon to consider the right hon. Gentleman's document on local government reform. Perhaps the Secretary of State now understands the difficulty that we face. I am glad he now has our document.

In the latter part of the right hon. Gentleman's speech he offered a glimmer of hope when he understood that a new initiative was needed for the valleys. It was nothing more than a glimmer of hope, however, because the right hon. Gentleman was short of detail on that initiative when he was challenged by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) on the central question of funding. He did not say if any new funding would be made available.

We shall certainly support any worthwhile intiative, but the Secretary of State must understand that the responsibility for getting Wales out of recession and into

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growth rests with him. No amount of fine words or encouragement from the Opposition will achieve that. We shall monitor progress on the valleys initiative carefully.

The right hon. Gentleman delivered a comprehensive speech, but it represented a departure from the normal Welsh day debates. I have read the previous speeches by the Secretary of State and his predecessor carefully and, normally, he treated us to the good-news offensive or the good-news initiative. In the past, the Secretary of State has announced some startling new initiatives and new programmes to be funded by the Government, and announced new jobs created by the Government and the private sector. Regrettably, no such announcements were made today. The right hon. Gentleman gave a fairly low-key speech. I listened carefully when he talked about the Marshals' announcement, which he made to the Welsh Grand Committee on 1 February. We had a fine debate on that then.

Although the right hon. Gentleman spoke about the Welsh Economic Council, he did not say whether it would comply with the promise given in the election manifesto that, in future, it would include representatives of the trade union movement and local authorities of Wales. That is the proposition that the right hon. Gentleman put to the electorate in Wales at the general election, but just a few months later he retreated from it.

We also heard about the Welsh Development Agency and of the new £50 million to be made available for property redevelopment. However, that money was included in the public expenditure plans that the right hon. Gentleman has already trailed. The Secretary of State may disagree, but there is no new money. I would be more than happy to have a discussion with him about recycling old money.

The Secretary of State has done today what he has done consistently; he announced, re-announced and re-announced yet again the statement about financing for the Welsh Development Agency. But that is not equivalent to new money. That expenditure was included in the public expenditure plans that were subject to considerable comment many weeks ago.

The right hon. Gentleman made such an announcement to divert attention from the central issue. I am sure that is why, at considerable inconvenience to many hon. Members, he chose today to make a statement about local government reform. There was absolutely no reason for that statement today because we shall be debating the issue next week. The document could have been produced tomorrow or on Wednesday so that local government representatives could have been consulted. He could have complied with the undertaking that he gave to the leaders of the Welsh authorities about having discussions with them about his proposals before they were announced. The right hon. Gentleman knew that he had nothing new to announce today, so he wanted to distract attention from that fact by making the statement about local government reform.

If there is one single issue that is clouding every aspect of Welsh life it is unemployment. Twelve months ago, 122,500 people in Wales were unemployed; today, more than 134,000 people are unemployed, which is equivalent to an increase of 9·5 per cent. Every day since our debate last year, while the Secretary of State has held on to his job, 32 people have lost their own. Unemployment is a symptom of past failure and the cause of the present failure of the right hon. Gentleman's economic policies. It is blighting the national economy of Wales, it is undermining the health of our communities and it is wasting the talents of thousands of our people.

The right hon. Gentleman may want to ignore unemployment or to disguise the reality of it, but, as year follows year, it becomes ever clearer that constant high unemployment is a fact of economic life under the Conservative Government. Even allowing for the manipulation of the figures, a comparison of the unemployment rate under each year of Labour Government with each year of Conservative Government since 1965 is dramatic. For the benefit of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), let me say that the unemployment rate was lower in every year of a Labour Government than the lowest figure achieved under a Conservative Government. The highest rate of unemployment in Wales under a Labour Government was 5·7 per cent. in 1978; the lowest rate of unemployment under a Conservative Government was 6·6 per cent. in 1990.

Throughout most of the 1980s the rate of unemployment in Wales was in double figures. Those figures were put to the Secretary of State at the last meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee and I should like to put a further point to him today.

High levels of unemployment are either a conscious act of policy by the Government or the inevitable consequence of the disastrous policies followed by the Government. Whatever the answer, it is unacceptable. After 15 years of continuous government—history did not start in 1985, as the Secretary of State suggested by the statistics that he gave us today—billions of pounds from North sea oil and gas, and the one-off windfall receipts from privatisation, the position is doubly unacceptable. No amount of synthetic compassion will divert attention from the fact that the Government are responsible for the 94 per cent. increase in unemployment since 1979, and the fact that it is now costing the Welsh economy 35 million working days every year at a cost to the Welsh economy of £1·2 billion a year.

Mr. Richards: I am a little concerned that the House may rely too heavily on the statistics and data given by the hon. Gentleman. He may recall that on 10 February in the Welsh Grand Committee he gave figures on unemployment and made comparisons with European countries, and I asked him:

"Is he comparing like with like when he compares this country with others?"—[*Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee*, 10 February 1993; c. 18.]

He replied in the affirmative. The research division of the Library——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman is anticipating a speech that he may wish to make later, but not now.

Mr. Davies: It was a lengthy reply, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will take the trouble to read the whole of it.

This year, the Secretary of State said, in his new year's message to the people of Wales in the *Cardiff Herald & Post*:

"there are now clear signs that better times are on the way."

There is precious little evidence of that, and it certainly will not happen if the Secretary of State continues to follow the policies that he has followed so far. He is a member of a Government with no strategy for those better times. When recovery does come—if it does—it will be despite

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Government policy, not because of it. We may eventually limp out of recession on the back of a low pound and lower interest rates, but if we do it will be due to the failure of Government policy on black Wednesday.

The worrying fact is that there are no mechanisms in place to build a sustained recovery. Much of our industry has been destroyed by past policy, and what remains is weakened by under-investment, a neglected infrastructure and an under-skilled work force.

In the same new year message, the Secretary of State said that he had

"laid the foundation for our future prosperity."

He also predicted the following:

"as spring follows winter, day follows night and Rowland Rat brought a new dawn for breakfast time T.V., economic recovery will certainly come."

It is no surprise that no one in Wales believes that. Rowland Rat might have brought a new dawn to TV-am, but the Government's policy soon put a stop to that. The sun set on puppet Rowland when TV-am lost its franchise last year. We can laugh about that at the Secretary of State's expense, but his policies are not much of a laughing matter for the people of Wales.

The cycle of unemployment and recession can be broken by a programme of strategic investment and by building on the partnership between the private and public sectors. The Secretary of State may talk a lot about partnership, but clearly he does not understand its meaning. How can he talk about partnership when he has undermined local government to such an extent that it is unable to play its full part in joint ventures with the Government and the private sector.

Blaenau Gwent's programme of urban regeneration was almost wiped out by the Secretary of State's recent revenue support grant settlement, despite the fact that the Welsh Development Agency provides 80 per cent. of the money for that programme. In Mid Glamorgan, all the capital programme has been wiped out by the same RSG settlement, including much-needed infrastructure investment.

Last week's unemployment rate reached 10·6 per cent. nationally. In some of our communities in Wales the figure is double the national rate. In the valleys of south Wales, unemployment—in reality a claimant count—is as high as 25 per cent., and everyone now accepts that real unemployment rates are much higher. If we take the claimant count and add to it the figure for economic inactivity—those out of work and not seeking work—we obtain a figure for male unemployment locally of about 40 per cent. Despite being given every opportunity, the Secretary of State has given no sign of what he intends to do about such high levels of real unemployment. The latest available figures from the 1991 census show that the inactivity rate for males aged between 16 and 64 jumped from 12·5 per cent. in 1981 to almost 19 per cent.—one in four for men of working age—in 1991.

The Secretary of State claims that Wales has not suffered as badly as the rest of the United Kingdom from increases in unemployment, but that is not true. A comparison of increases in unemployment since the beginning of the recession shows that, while Scotland's jobless rate increased by 26 per cent., Northern Ireland's and the northern region's both increased by 41 per cent. and the north-west's increased by 46 per cent., Wales' unemployment rate grew by 62 per cent.

However, unemployment is not a problem in isolation. Regions of high unemployment are associated with regions of low wages, poor working conditions and part-time work. All those factors mean that less money circulates in the local economy. Mid Glamorgan has the lowest levels of per capita gross domestic product and household income of any county in the United Kingdom. When less money circulates in the economy, local businesses and services lose jobs.

What is the Government's latest offering to help our beleaguered communities? They place right at the heart of Government policy measures that will further undermine the lowest paid and most vulnerable, take up parliamentary time, cause offence to the public and serve no useful purpose. The Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill has a benign enough title, but is a measure to abolish the wages councils and remove from more than 109,000 of the lowest-paid workers in Wales the meagre protection that they presently enjoy. Even if the effect of that measure was to reduce the wages of the low paid by 20p an hour, the loss in spending power to the Welsh economy would be more than £390,000 a week, or £20 million a year. The lowest paid are concentrated in the poorest regions. The Secretary of State will be adding misery to already heavily deprived communities. Wales has the lowest average earnings for men in full-time employment of any region in the United Kingdom.

The Government place right at the heart of their policy taking away part-time employment. They are alienating themselves in international opinion through their manic determination to opt out of the social chapter. That chapter does not affect wage rates, bargaining procedures or trade union rights, but confers some small measure of employment protection. Why should not a single market with common laws on finance, trade, consumer protection and travel have common measures to offer some protection to working people? The Government say that Britain cannot enjoy such measures. Unique among all those in Europe, we cannot afford them. They are okay for the Germans, French, Italians, Irish and the rest, but the British economy is in such a desperate state that the Government cannot afford to give British citizens the same protection.

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the abolition of the wages councils, far from reducing the amount of money available in the Welsh economy, will increase it by increasing the number of jobs at the margin?

Mr. Davies: No, I do not accept that. There is no clearer sign of the failure and waste of the past 14 years than the Government's fear of these minimal measures of protection for low-paid Welsh workers. The absence of decent, regular full-time employment, without even the prospect of such employment, will have ever increasing social consequences.

The Secretary of State for Wales has not even begun to count the cost of his policies, which have led to the progressive casualisation of employment. The reduction of full-time jobs and the knock-down impact on pensions, decent conditions and rights of employment, both in the

private sector and increasingly in the public services, will have growing social consequences throughout Wales, and especially for the valley communities.

During the past decade Wales has suffered a decline compared with the rest of the United Kingdom and Europe. The recession places additional burdens on local authorities, because they have to house the homeless, provide support for the unemployed and disadvantaged and care for the poor and the elderly. If we are to get out of the slump it will be in no small measure due to public expenditure on infrastructure, new roads, development programmes and investment in education and training. It will also come about by providing jobs in the building of new homes, schools, roads and environmental improvements.

Government policies are hostile to democratically accountable local authorities, which can be the key to the regeneration process. Education and health are two vital services which vividly demonstrate the Government's approach. It is intended to take away service provision from local democratically accountable structures and to push through unpopular opt-out reforms. Of course, they have been a miserable failure. Wales's first NHS trust, in Pembrokeshire, saw its waiting list soar within months of being set up, and across the Principality other applications for trust status have been bitterly opposed by the communities that they serve. Only last week it was revealed that two-year waiting lists have shown the patients charter to be nothing but a sham.

The number of schools in Wales has been cut and class sizes have been increased throughout the sector. The Government threaten and bully and talk of the need to reduce surplus places. What happens when local authorities try to comply? There is no better example than what happened in Cwmcarn. The places are possibly surplus to the requirements of the LEA, but they are ideal for the Government. They are not surplus to their requirements, because they needed just such schools to opt out, to allow the Welsh Office to arrogate even more power to itself.

Meanwhile, quangos multiply and flourish, while elected authorities, responsible and accountable to the public and with high standards of financial propriety—ensured through internal and external audit, and full public scrutiny—are denied essential resources. Quangos in Wales now control more than £1·4 billion of public expenditure—but they do not represent the communities over which they have so much influence.

Over the past year public disquiet has grown about the cynical way in which the Secretary of State for Wales uses his power of appointment to increase the political power of the Conservative party in Wales. I do not need to remind anyone that the constituency secretary of the Under-Secretary of State was appointed to the board of South Glamorgan health authority but was forced to resign in the public outcry that followed.

Twelve months ago Ian Grist was a devoted Back-Bench supporter of the Government. The voters of Cardiff, Central did not show much devotion to him, and they booted him out at the general election. Now, he is the chair of South Glamorgan area health authority. Rejected by the voters, appointed by the Tories—that is what public life in Wales in 1993 is all about.

Mr. Dafis: May I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that two members of the East Dyfed health authority are former failed Conservative candidates for my constituency? That seems to prove the point.

Mr. Davies: Indeed. It occurs to me that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) owed his whole existence in public life before he was elected to this place to the patronage of the Secretary of State.

Mr. Sweeney: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the appointment of Mr. Ian Grist as chairman of the South Glamorgan health authority reflected his ability and experience, and that it was therefore a highly suitable appointment of which no criticism should be made?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Gentleman should understand that my colleagues and I saw the then Member for Cardiff, Central, Mr. Grist, here in the House, so we fully appreciated all his abilities. Wherever the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) intervenes, I am forcefully struck by how well served the voters of his constituency were by John P. Smith.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I will give way to the Minister, but I must warn him that his hon. Friends are queuing up behind him.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am glad to hear that they are. Before the hon. Gentleman leaves the point about the non-departmental public bodies, does he acknowledge that there has been a net increase of only three quangos since we took office—quangos of an executive character? Also, will he deal with some of the appointments made to the 16 quangos that existed in the days of the Labour Government?

Mr. Davies: The fact is that three trusts have been established in the course of this year. We have only to look at the thrust of Government policy to see what is going on. The measures to reform the national health service are designed to promulgate further quangos. The Education Bill, now going through the House, is deliberately designed to strip away from elected education authorities responsibility for the strategic management of education. That responsibility will go directly to a new quango being established by the Welsh Office. The whole purpose of Government policy is to take power to the Welsh Office —and I understand why. The Tories will never win elected power in Wales. The only way that they can exercise power there is by appointment and by patronage. That serves only to strengthen the argument for an assembly to democratise our public life—an argument that is growing apace in Wales.

Why does not the Secretary of State want democratically elected local government to bring together in partnership private and public sector interests? Who knows better than the communities themselves what needs to be done and how the regeneration process can begin? The Secretary of State talks of partnership and consensus with local government. What he means by consensus is, "I decide, you abide." Why does he not have a strategy for revival? Why does he not listen to the advice he has given and give an immediate boost to jobs by a programme of

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housing, construction and repair—the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers)? Why does he not put the building industry back on its feet, get the homeless off the streets and give families homes of their own? He could do these things tomorrow if he had the political will.

Why does the right hon. Gentleman not restore the successive cuts that he has made to local services and allow the provision of services determined by communities within communities? Why does he not put in place the ingredients for long-term economic recovery: training and skills development, innovation, nurturing indigenous industry, and a supply initiative of real value to integrate our manufacturing economy? Instead he has cut the training and enterprise councils' budgets for youth training by 8·5 per cent. and employment training by more than 10 per cent. The Treasury discount rate makes borrowing from the WDA prohibitive for innovative enterprises while the Welsh Office supply initiative has little chance of success while training and innovation are starved of funding.

In a Welsh Office press release on 15 February the Secretary of State claimed:

"The central responsibility of the Welsh Office is, without doubt, to enhance the economic strength of Wales."

That is true, but he will not fulfil that responsibility with his present policies. Unveiling the Welsh Office spending plans for next year the Secretary of State cut housing expenditure by £23 million in cash terms alone. Spending on industry, employment and training was cut by £24 million and roads, transport and infrastructure also suffered. Those services are vital for regeneration and are the means by which we can pull ourselves out of recession.

The Secretary of State's job is to represent the people of Wales in the Cabinet, not to represent the Cabinet in Wales, but it was the President of the Board of Trade who announced pit closures in Wales. I am told that that was much to the Secretary of State's surprise because no one told him. It was the President of the Board of Trade who announced that he would redraw the map for assisted area status in Wales and it was the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food who announced cuts in the hill livestock compensatory allowance, threatening the very existence of economic activity in the Welsh uplands.

When the Secretary of State for Wales gets around to making a decision for the people of Wales he always seems to make the wrong one. When he was given the training and enterprise councils by the Secretary of State for Employment his first act was to cut their budgets. However, in a Welsh Office press release issued on 11 February last year to launch the White Paper entitled "People, Jobs and Opportunity" he said:

"People, jobs and opportunities are at the heart of our work to make Wales prosper. I have always laid great stress upon that most valuable resource—the skills of our people."

Those are fine words but they are followed by destructive actions. If the Secretary of State understands what needs to be done, why on earth does he not do it?

In the absence of positive action to get Wales back to work, the Government are building a dependency culture. Communities are unable, although willing, to work and they have no alternative but to turn wholesale to derisory state benefits which serve only to break the confidence of communities that are already under siege from economic decline. The 1991 census for Mid Glamorgan reveals that 22·2 per cent. of households with dependent children had no adult in work and depended on unemployment benefit as the sole source of income. That benefit is one of the lowest in Europe and it is widely recognised that it is not enough to live on.

Recent research by the Joseph Rowntree trust concluded that income support meets only about two thirds of the budget that is needed to sustain a family with children in a modest lifestyle and that even with family credit incomes would be too low. I shall give three examples. Since 1979 homelessness in Wales has increased by 109 per cent., male suicides by 19 per cent. and divorce by 19·6 per cent. Families and whole communities come under the strain of economic decline. For me the most tragic and dramatic evidence of the cost is the mounting toll of vandalism and lawlessness. Now the Government promise a crackdown on crime. Tough sentences without tough remedies for their causes are, they say, the answer. They are too ashamed of their record to acknowledge the link between poor health, crime and vandalism, educational under-achievement and unemployment. Those problems are epidemics and, like the health epidemics of Victorian times, they will not be stopped until the causes have been identified and eradicated. Only the British Prime Minister, facing a crisis of his party's own making, can tell us that we need less understanding. It is the greed and prejudice of Tory philosophy which has got us into this state. No wonder they do not want people to understand.

Mr. Rogers: My hon. Friend is right in imputing the smell of hypocrisy to the Prime Minister's proposals for a crackdown on crime. Welsh Members in the South Wales police authority area know that when that authority applied for 40 extra constables the year before last it did not get even one. It has received a derisory amount for every application. The trouble with the Government is that they do not put their money where their mouth is.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is correct and he reminds me of a further matter which we see clearly in his constituency—the growth of vigilante groups. That is a clear illustration of how communities who feel that they are under siege are losing confidence in the ability of the authorities to maintain law and order on our streets.

Mr. Roy Hughes: My hon. Friend is naturally concerned about the welfare of the family. Has he noticed the speculation in the press and the media generally, some of which has apparently been inspired, about the possibility of VAT on food? What effect would that have on poorer families in Wales?

Mr. Davies: It is clear that that would be a further burden. When the Government were desperately trying to get out of the poll tax fiasco, they had no compunction about increasing VAT by 2·5 per cent. across the board. The Secretary of State was the architect of that. We all know that that has had a devastating impact. Any further VAT increase, especially if VAT is imposed on items that are currently zero rated, would be devastating for the poorer people in our communities. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery wishes to intervene about the police, in which he has a particular interest. I happily give way to him.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I echo the hon. Gentleman's comments about crime, which is a matter of great concern, and about the Government's attitude. Does he share my suspicion that the Government want to dismember some efficient police forces in Wales in order to save money, and that what they say about crime and what they do about it are often far distant?

Mr. Davies: The hon. and learned Gentleman makes a powerful case to which I cannot add much. He will have seen the valuable research developed by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) which graphically demonstrates how the Government are long on words and short on action.

During the past 15 years the Government have vilified and undermined all the social institutions that help to keep the fabric of society together and who dare to speak out against Government policy, be they trade unions, local authorities, churches or chapels. The Government now try to tell us that there is no such thing as community, echoing Lady Thatcher's words that there is no such thing as society. The individual is all, they say. They are wrong, and the evidence is all around us.

Since 1980, violence against the person has increased by 113 per cent., burglary by 63 per cent., robbery by 61 per cent. and criminal damage by 154 per cent. The numbers convicted of drug abuse have increased by over 20 per cent. Those are all symptoms of the growing social malaise afflicting our society.

Mr. Flynn: Does my hon. Friend agree that a further example of the undermining of our public health services is that at this very moment Gwent area health authority is trying to persuade BUPA to take 50 operations in plastic surgery that could be carried out at Chepstow? Surgeons there are angry that before 1 April when the Glanhafren trust is set up this could be a way in which BUPA could profit from the continued underfunding of the health service in Gwent.

Mr. Davies: That point is relevant to the case that I was making earlier about quangos and the way in which the national health service is being restructured to take powers out of democratically accountable bodies and put them into the hands of the private sector. We know that that will always be ineffective.

Let me return to the problem of crime. The Tories will always claim that they spend more on the police, but that is not true. While crime rates have rocketed, we in Wales have had proportionally lower policing levels since 1979. The South Wales constabulary, for example, has experienced a 138 per cent. increase in crime levels since 1979, while policing levels have increased by a mere 3 per cent. compared with a 6·7 per cent. increase in England and Wales as a whole—an increase that is higher than that in every one of the Welsh constabularies. Dyfed-Powys police experienced a 132 per cent. increase in crime since 1979, but only a 1 per cent. increase in policing levels.

All that, and the Prime Minister tells us that we need to condemn a little more and understand a little less. What we need is not less but more understanding. Do the Government not understand why crime has increased so much in the past 15 years? The poorest, most vulnerable communities, which are condemned by the Prime Minister and have suffered most under the Government, understand why, because they have to live with the reality of Government policies every day of their lives.

Mr. Donald Anderson: When he looks at the effect of public expenditure cuts on the crime budget, will my hon. Friend look not only at the freeze on police numbers but at the long saga of our attempts to get a secure unit in south-west Wales?

Mr. Davies: Again, all that I can say is that my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth has demonstrated clearly the Government's failure, despite repeated promises, to make adequate provision for persistent young offenders.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The House should be aware that a joint Welsh Office-West Glamorgan working group is now engaging consultants to find a site to establish a secure unit.

Mr. Davies: That promise was made two years ago—two years in which those persistent offenders who should have been receiving the proper treatment for whatever affliction causes them to be the menace that they are to society were left to themselves. Our communities in Wales have suffered from that recurring menace while the right hon. Gentleman and the Welsh Office have done nothing.

Sir Wyn Roberts: It is a local authority responsibility.

Mr. Davies: The Minister cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that everything is in hand because the Welsh Office is planning and discussing and will fund a project and then say, when he full knows that local authorities are underfunded, that it is their responsibility. What he and his Secretary of State have to understand is that if they follow policies that recreate mass unemployment and impoverished communities that waste the potential of individuals, nobody should be surprised at the consequences. Their policies beget poverty and deprivation and poverty and deprivation breed crime and alienation. We need no lectures on morality from a party whose very policies have created those evils.

We do not need a knee-jerk reaction from Tory Members who neither understand nor care, or a reintroduction of the short, sharp shock, which failed, or locking young criminals away into a prison culture. We need a policy that tackles the problem at its heart. We must re-examine our communities, we must break the cycle of unemployment, poverty and deprivation—all the things that lead to the breakdown of community spirit and precipitate the growth of violence. There is no sign from the Secretary of State that he has even started to understand the nature of the task that he faces.

6.4 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I have sat here listening to the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) for some time now and have had a severe attack of déjà vu. Before I go any further, let me say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how gratifying it is that you are wearing the national emblem of Wales in your lapel.

On 10 February, when the Welsh Grand Committee debated unemployment in Wales, I said:

> "The hon. Member for Caerphilly said that the Labour party had an economic strategy to reduce unemployment in Wales. I listened with great interest to his speech. When he sat down, I was amazed that he had not said a word about strategy or job creation."

I am equally amazed now, if not even more so, because on that occasion the hon. Gentleman said:

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"Indeed, we have a strategy, and I look forward to the debate on Wales that we shall have on the Floor of the House on 1 March, and to one or two events before that. I shall explain, in as much detail as the Secretary of State or the hon. Gentleman wants, the course of action that should be followed."

We have not heard a word about strategy. The hon. Gentleman has not offered any details. If he would like to summarise his strategy now, I would be more than happy to give way.

Mr. Ron Davies: I will happily do that. I spent some time explaining in full detail what those proposals were. I have even sent a copy of them to the Secretary of State for Wales and, if the hon. Gentleman would feel happier, I shall send him a copy as well. It is a 52-page document, which will take some reading, but it may help him to sleep at night.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman is clearly too embarrassed to summarise what is in the document.

I have said before that the House should not rely on the data that the hon. Gentleman presents to it. In the debate on 10 February, I intervened in the hon. Gentleman's speech to ask him whether the average wage statistic that he quoted included overtime. I also asked:

"Is he comparing like with like when he compares this country with others?"—[*Official Report, Welsh Grand Committee*, 10 February 1993; c. 18-31.]

He replied, "Of course I am." I asked the statistical section of the research division of the House of Commons Library—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that it is impartial—about the statistics that he quoted then and again today. It said:

"International comparisons of social security are fraught with difficulty. For example, unemployed people in the UK do not just receive unemployment benefit but they can also receive income support (which can include help with mortgage payments), housing benefit, community charge benefit and national insurance credits . . . Thus looking at the standard rate of unemployment benefit tells one little about the actual social security benefit being received by the unemployed. This problem is greatly magnified when one starts trying to make comparisons with 11 other countries where the benefit systems are equally complex."

In other words, the data and statistics that the hon. Gentleman offered the House were spurious, and I believe that he knows that.

We hear much from Opposition parties about democracy and democratic rights. I want to expose the difference between what they say in public and what they do in practice. I could have chosen any one of several issues as examples, but, so as to be as fair as possible to them, I have chosen a subject that they claim is close to their hearts—education.

When enacted, the Education Bill will provide the framework for an education system that will take Wales into the next century and ensure that our children are equipped with the skills that will enable them to meet the demands of a new millennium. Against that background, I feel that it is important to discuss the role of Opposition parties in undermining the democratic choice of parents who want grant-maintained schools in Wales. Grant-maintained schools have provided the opportunity for teachers and parents to determine how a school is run and the quality of the education that is offered to the children who attend it. I am fortunate to have a school in my constituency—Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan—that rose from under the yoke of local education authority control in January.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Richards: I should like to make some progress. I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman because he will drag my family into the debate, which I am not having.

I wish Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan the very best of good fortune as it forges a new path towards academic excellence.

Two other schools in my constituency have voted in favour of becoming grant maintained. They are Ysgol Uwchradd Eirias and Ysgol Pen-Y-Bryn. Unfortunately, both suffered from some devious tactics to undermine their wishes. In due course I shall shed some light on those tactics. A third school in my constituency, Ysgol Bryn Elian, is soon to ballot parents on grant-maintained status.

The critics of grant-maintained schools would do well to note recent figures that have been made available by the grant-maintained school centre, which is an informed and professional establishment. The figures show that, of the schools that have opted out, 100 per cent. of primaries and 77 per cent. of secondaries are employing more teachers. That means smaller class sizes, and smaller class sizes means more attention being given to the specific needs of each child.

More and more schools across Wales are starting to recognise the benefits that grant-maintained status allows them. Over the next few years we can expect to see more schools leaving the control of LEAs, providing that the LEAs discontinue their destructive campaign, which is motivated by self-interest. The *Western Mail* survey recently revealed that more than 100 schools have expressed an interest in opting out of council controls, despite the best efforts of the general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, who has been urging his members to work within their communities to develop grass-root opposition to the Government's plan to allow schools to decide their own future.

A week or so ago, one of the Badge Messengers brought a green piece of paper to inform me in the Chamber that the National Union of Teachers in Clwyd wanted to lobby me. To my surprise, I found that the NUT's representative was no other than my Labour party opponent at the general election. He had come all the way from Rhyl to lobby me in the House. A supply teacher had to be found to fill his place at school while he came here to lobby me.

That is typical of the fossilised attitude that schools in my constituency have been confronted with time and time again. Those who seek to place road blocks in the way of progress do so for political reasons. They care little about the welfare of those they claim to represent. Unfortunately, we frequently see such displays of selfishness by Opposition Members.

I see the faces of many Opposition Members who have abused their position in the education system. They do not advance what is best for children. Instead, they teach what is best for their political ends. They have little interest in improving education because they are more concerned with keeping happy their union friends, who have helped to place them in the House. It is—[HON. MEMBERS: "Name them."] For example, the hon. Member for Caerphilly lists education as a special political interest. I browsed through

Hansard to see what contribution the hon. Gentleman had made to debates on education since his unfortunate election to the House in 1983. Not much is the short answer. By his own admission, his first contribution to an education debate was on 11 November 1992.

Mr. Alex Carlile: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it open to an hon. Member to accuse other hon. Members of abuse of their position in the education system? The hon. Gentleman appears not to be a fast learner about what is and what is not parliamentary. He seems to be making a direct allegation of dishonesty and corruption. I submit that he should choose his words rather more honourably and carefully.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The Chair would not tolerate any accusation of dishonesty or corruption, but there is the cut and thrust of debate, in which we seem to be engaging so far.

Mr. Richards: I return to——

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Richards: Of course.

Mr. Davies: This is all part of the cut and thrust of debate. I think that all my right hon. and hon. Friends would recognise that the hon. Gentleman is an odious little man.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a bit too much thrust. I ask the hon. Member to withdraw the word "odious".

Mr. Davies: I thought that it was being sizeist that was causing you some concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If "odious" is not acceptable, I withdraw it. I wish to cause no offence to you, but the hon. Gentleman is a different matter.

As the hon. Gentleman has chosen to engage in some research on my behalf, I wish to put on record that prior to my election in 1983 I was a senior education officer with Mid Glamorgan county council. Quite properly, therefore, I maintained a close interest in education matters. From 1984 to 1987 I was a member of the Opposition Whips' Office. The hon. Gentleman will know that that places certain restraints on what one can and cannot do. Since 1987, I was an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on agriculture, which meant, quite reasonably, that I did not involve myself in education debates. If the hon. Gentleman researches the questions that I have asked, he will find that the position is entirely different.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Member for Caerphilly is well known as a hard cheese that has an odour of its own.

On 10 November 1992—of course, he has a special interest—the hon. Gentleman said:

"This is my first opportunity to take part in an education debate."

That was after nine years. The hon. Gentleman then bored the House for well over 40 minutes with a garbled hotch-potch of accusations and demented mutterings to which we Welsh Members are accustomed. I am sure that it came as something of a shock to other hon. Members who were in the Chamber on that day. I have always believed that it is possible to learn something from the greatest fool on this earth, but the hon. Gentleman has made me change my mind.

I took particular exception to the hon. Gentleman's vicious and scurrilous attack on Cwmcarn school, which was as follows:

"I know where Cwmcarn school is. I taught a couple of miles up the road at Newbridge school."

That was geography GCSE. The hon. Gentleman continued:

"I know, too, that that school is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn".

The right hon. Gentleman is now, of course, no longer in his place. The hon. Member for Caerphilly then said:

"I also know that it would not have been granted permission to opt out. That decision had nothing to do with the educational merits of Cwmcarn school. It was an act of deliberate malice to try to embarrass the leader of the Labour party."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 770-75.]

Really, the hon. Gentleman should not judge everybody by his own standards. I thank the hon. Member for Caerphilly for giving the House an insight into the twisted machinations of the socialist thought process. Indeed, if the Labour party ever returned to power, which is unlikely, it would conduct its education policy along party political lines, using the education system as a tool of socialist dogma, just as it has done in the past. I am glad that the Conservative party has no truck with such devious and evil scheming.

Mr. Llew Smith: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the examination results of Cwmcarn school are probably the worst in Wales and that the number of pupils is down to about 300?

Mr. Richards: Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that we should judge the school after only two years of grant-maintained status?

Mr. Smith: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Richards: No.

Mr. Smith: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In the community from which I come we have a quaint old tradition—it is that when people pose a question, an opportunity is given to answer it. Will the hon. Gentleman follow that fine tradition? He has asked me a question and he should give me an opportunity to answer it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that that has nothing to do with the Chair. I hope that we will have no more points of order of that sort.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) knows full well that the local education authority had run down the school for many years prior to its attaining grant-maintained status.

Cwmcarn attained GMS despite being the victim of a vicious campaign by Gwent education authority. Since attaining GMS the school's access to the feeder primary schools has been cut off, which is causing the school some hardship. However, it is overcoming these hardships because of the quality of education that it offers.

Gwent is waging a campaign of non-co-operation, thereby interfering with the education of children whose parents pay the community charge and have a right to have their wishes respected by Gwent county council. Indeed, I understand that the council has prevented the schools under its control from even playing games with Cwmcarn. The school has shown an amazing tolerance in the face of such an unjustified assault on its wish to choose grant-maintained status, even going as far as allowing

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Gwent's attendance and careers officer access to its information files while being denied the reciprocal courtesy.

Cwmcarn is not alone in its struggle against hostile authorities that are terrified of having their shortcomings exposed for all to see. Caer Geiliog school in Ynys Môn has also suffered at the hands of Gwynedd county council and the nationalists who run it. It had an 80 per cent. vote in favour of GMS, but it has been subjected to a catalogue of abuse by an authority that refuses to acknowledge the wishes of the community.

While the school's application for GMS was being considered, the headmaster was approached by senior figures in the education department and offered a £30,000 lump sum, together with £11,000 per annum pension, which included six years enhancement, if he would slip away quietly. They even implied that he should feign sickness to retire early. After he refused that obscene offer, he was informed that if the school failed in its application for GMS he would be sacked.

Gwynedd education authority has allowed itself to be hijacked by the nationalist movement, to the detriment of the education needs of the children whom the authority is supposed to serve. Caer Geiliog has decided to leave the LEA's stranglehold as the headmaster and parents feel that no interest is being taken in the school's welfare because it is 95 per cent. English speaking. However, despite that, Her Majesty's inspectorate has recorded that the quality of written and spoken Welsh at the school is of a standard equal to that in schools where Welsh is the predominant language. That is purely as a result of the dedication of the headmaster and his staff to the importance of the Welsh language. In fact, the headmaster has previously been headmaster of a Welsh-speaking school.

Since the school's application for GMS, the headmaster has been threatened with physical violence, as has his wife and 10-year-old child. The chairman of the school's board of governors has lived in Wales for 20 years, but he has been told by nationalists to get out of Wales by 1 March —today, St. David's day—or be burnt out of his home. The irony is that his teenage daughter, who was born in Wales, shoots competitively for our national team.

What I also find distressing is the total lack of concern about such indefensible behaviour shown by the local Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones), and his supporters, presumably called the Ynys moaners. They have failed to condemn the nationalists' actions.

Mr. Llwyd: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) has a phobia about nationalism, which is well known. I want to make it clear that such unwarranted attacks——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Llwyd: Those unwarranted attacks——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. He is asking me to make a decision from the Chair, so it must be a matter on which I can give a ruling.

Mr. Llwyd: May I ask whether the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West warned my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) that he would vilify him during his speech?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is correct to suggest that it is usual practice in this Chamber for an hon. Member to forewarn another hon. Member if he intends to mention him. It is also normal practice for the hon. Member to give way to the hon. Member whom he mentions if that hon. Member is in the Chamber. However, the decision rests entirely with the hon. Member who has the floor.

Mr. Richards: In fact, I did inform the hon. Member for Ynys Môn that I would raise the matter. He is not in his seat, which is a matter for him.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: I am aware of the school to which the hon. Gentleman has referred, so I believe some of his comments. If he has definite evidence, will he make it public outside this House? On the point about the threats that have been made, I have met the chairman of the governing body and I can vouch for that. Similar threats have been made to three people in my constituency who have resisted compulsory Welsh medium education. In fact, they are standing up for the rights of English speakers to have an education in the English language, in the same way as we want Welsh speakers to have an education in the Welsh language. I ask my hon. Friends to listen carefully to what the hon. Gentleman is saying. Although I dismiss much of his earlier remarks, the comments relating to that particular school are important.

Mr. Richards: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for supporting the evidence that I have put before the House about the behaviour of some education authorities.

Mr. Dafis: The hon. Gentleman said that Gwynedd county council had fallen into the hands of the nationalists. Does he accept that those nationalists have had absolutely nothing to do with the threats to which he referred? They would condemn them, as we would all condemn them and just as much as the hon. Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) has condemned them.

Mr. Richards: I would like to know how the hon. Gentleman knows what all the nationalists in Gwynedd education authority are doing or thinking.

Mr. Dafis: Will the hon. Gentleman differentiate clearly between those people who hold responsible posts on Gwynedd county council and are responsible for education policy and those who make disgraceful threats against individuals who disagree with their point of view?

Mr. Richards: I will not make that differentiation, but I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges that such threats have been made.

There are examples of other LEAs deliberately obstructing schools which are in the process of becoming grant maintained or which have achieved that status, but time prevents me from going into greater detail.

In my own constituency, Ysgol Pen-Y-Bryn voted on 14 December to become grant maintained by the overwhelming majority of nine to one in favour. Even after that resounding endorsement by parents to opt out of local authority control, Clwyd education department wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales

claiming that it had not been properly consulted. That claim was spurious, and I hope that my right hon. Friend will reject it.

Clwyd education authority has an unenviable record of opposing schools that express an interest in grant-maintained status. Two years ago, when Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan first balloted for GMS, the authority's behaviour was scandalous. Since 1978, it had been listed by Clwyd county council as a priority for building extension and refurbishment. Despite that status, numerous presentations and representations were made by the governors and parents to Clwyd LEA to highlight the decades of neglect in the maintenance of existing buildings—all to no avail.

During the first opt-out campaign in 1990, parents and teachers were unconditionally promised a £1 million building programme if the school did not opt out. Shortly after that school's unsuccessful attempt to opt out, the building programme became conditional on the sale of four hectares of its playing fields. Fortunately, the land remains in school and community use pending a decision on its disposal. I shall fight to ensure that the land remains with the school.

The final straw for Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan came in early 1992, when Clwyd education authority again delayed the building programme promised in 1990. The excuse given was lack of funds, but the real reason was political malice. Influenced primarily by the authority's failure again to deliver the promised programme, the school voted 91 per cent. in favour of opting out, and was accepted for GMS by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State last December.

Similar interference has been experienced by other schools in Wales. When Brynmawr school in Gwent initially expressed a desire to opt out, the county council withdrew its support for projects currently under way and allowed the school's maintenance to lapse. In Penarth, Stenwell school, despite keeping the council informed throughout its first ballot, was forced to nullify that ballot and start the lengthy process again on a rather dubious technicality. The frustration that that caused prompted parents to take matters into their own hands and to conduct a parental petition to ensure that the school's wishes were respected by the LEA.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to ensure that such behaviour is not permitted to continue to the detriment of not only schools and children affected but those schools that are deciding whether or not to opt for GMS. Support must be given to all the schools that are suffering rabid and destructive opposition. Hostile authorities must not be allowed to undermine democracy and to play politics with the future of the children of Wales.

It is amusing that the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), who is staring at the ceiling, said on the Second Reading of the Education Bill on 9 November 1992:

"The last thing they want"—

meaning education experts—

"are grant-maintained schools in the south Wales valleys or in the inner parts of Cardiff, Swansea and Newport. Is it any wonder that of the 692 ballots for opt out in Britain only 121 came from Labour-controlled local authorities?"—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 709.]

What I say is that it is a wonder that so many applications came from Labour-controlled authorities when one considers that their bully boys were hard at work.

I have given many reasons why the number is so low, and the bully boys have certainly done their work in the time-honoured fashion. Labour has never been particularly comfortable about allowing choice and freedom, and will do anything to deny it to the people. Who are the experts that the hon. Member for Torfaen so freely quoted? Are they the parents of the children who attend the schools—or the unions, which are determined not to lose any of the power that they currently wield?

The people of Wales deserve democracy, for their opinions to be taken into account, and for their wishes to be respected free of any party political considerations. No school will be forced into opting out of LEA control, but parents must have the freedom to choose the best for their children. They are tired of their schools being neglected and run down because LEAs choose to spend their money elsewhere on pet projects—such as county halls—instead of on school repairs and general maintenance.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts) pointed out, education authorities in Wales have underspent their capital allocations by more than 15 per cent. this year, in addition to the underspend in the previous two years. Those years of neglect have mounted up. In south Glamorgan alone, the backlog of maintenance work amounts to £40 million. The local authority finds it convenient to blame the Government for that horrific state of affairs, but——

Mr. Gareth Wardell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you remind me whether this is the Committee stage of the Education Bill or whether we are still conducting the St. David's day debate? The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) seems to be taking the House into areas in a way that encroaches on the time of other right hon. and hon. Members.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman makes his point, with force.

Mr. Richards: I do not have far to go—[HON. MEMBERS: "Too true."]—but the whole purpose of choosing the subject of education is to explain and to emphasise how Opposition parties undermine democracy in Wales while at the same time talking about the need for democracy.

In last November's education debate, the hon. Member for Caerphilly said:

"There is a need for reform. We want decent buildings and an end to overcrowding."

He then accused the Government of

"appalling interference with the good practice that has been developed by our local education authorities."—[*Official Report*, 10 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 772.]

If he calls the catalogue of LEA abuses that I listed in the past few minutes good practice, he is living on a different planet from the rest of us. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman knows anything about grant-maintained schools. If he did, I am sure that he would change his definition of good practice. Good practice is when 72 per cent. of grant-maintained secondary schools and 88 per cent. of primary schools have improved their pupil-to-teacher ratio. Good practice is when 65 per cent. of grant-maintained secondary schools have introduced new subjects to their curriculums. Good practice is being able to offer more books and equipment along with improved facilities. That is good practice—not the LEA neglect and shirking of responsibility to which the hon. Gentleman so fondly referred.

Labour's manifesto at the last general election pledged to ensure that no primary school child would be taught in a class of more than 30 students. Labour was suitably

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vague about how that would be achieved. It is probably safe to say that it did not know. As usual, we were way ahead of Labour and had already developed a way of achieving that goal. In 80 per cent. of grant-maintained primary schools, currently the teacher-to-student ratio is 25 to one or less. That success is called going out and meeting the challenge—yes, and making the change. That is something of which Labour has always been incapable.

The Labour party in Wales has accused the Government of playing politics with the education system, yet it is Labour Members who are union-sponsored and must report back to their puppet masters. That was never more obvious than when the former shadow Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), said:

"Grant maintained schools are not a reality in the political firmament in Wales."

As I have tried to illustrate, this is yet another example of Labour playing politics with education. When will the party break the link, and realise that the people of Wales, rather than the Labour party, must be allowed to choose whether to accept grant-maintained schools?

6.40 pm

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Given the time available, I shall not follow the characteristic speech of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards); I think it better to leave him to wallow in his obsessions and in the idea of his forebears.

When you entered the Chair wearing a nice daffodil in your lapel, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you may have thought that you had put Maastricht behind you for a short time. *[Laughter.]* I note certain nervous reactions to the word "Maastricht"; I do not know whether they are withdrawal symptoms, or something else. In any event, I shall not speak for long: certainly, I shall not speak for 35 minutes. I want to speak briefly about regional policy, which was touched on by the Secretary of State, and by some of my hon. Friends in interventions.

It is, of course, impossible to discuss regional policy in Wales without discussing the European Economic Community. Most regional policy is now determined not even by the Welsh Office, but according to the structures laid down by the EEC. We had a debate last week on the various protocols and articles of the Maastricht treaty which relate to regional policy—they are very important to Wales—as well as a debate on the Committee of the Regions. My complaint is that, apart from the speeches of my hon. Friends the Members for Neath (Mr. Hain) and for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands)—who cannot be present this evening—nearly all the speeches dealt with the membership of the Committee of the Regions.

It was rather depressing to note the number of speeches, made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, about the membership of that Committe. The speeches questioned whether the Committee would include community councillors, county councillors, nominated persons or other members. Personally, I do not care who is appointed to that Committee; it is just another quango. I thought that we were against quangos. The Committee has no authority and no power: it merely enables those who are fortunate enough—as they may see it—to be members to take nice trips to Brussels.

We heard nothing in those speeches about the problem of Wales and the regions. We heard nothing from the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—which is not surprising, because he replies to such debates in a very perfunctory fashion. Sadly—I say this more in sorrow than in anger—we heard nothing from the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, who dealt almost entirely with the subject of the Committee of the Regions and completely omitted to deal with the real problems—and the real consequences for areas on the periphery such as Wales—of the contents of the Maastricht treaty and, indeed, of the regional policy of the European Community.

The Liberal Democrats, too, said nothing about the Committee of the Regions, or, indeed, about the way in which regional policy in Wales is dealt with in the Maastricht treaty. Members of the party that sometimes likes to describe itself as the national party of Wales were queuing up to debate the membership of the Committee, but we heard very little about that—except at the very end of the speech of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones): I am sorry that he is not present. He made a plaintive plea to the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office for more railways and for the money to finance them. Of course, there is no money in the Maastricht treaty for more railways, or more infrastructure, for the western part of Britain.

The western part of Britain comprises Wales, along with other parts of Britain. My argument is that Wales and other parts of the west of Britain will suffer grievously as a result of the way in which the Maastricht treaty was negotiated. Where was the Secretary of State for Wales then? Where, indeed, was the Minister of State? During Welsh questions, I was able to ask where the Secretary of State had been during the negotiation of the EC directive on abattoirs: that may strike hon. Members as a small matter, but many people do not see it as such.

Where was the Secretary of State for Wales, and where was the Welsh Office, when the Maastricht treaty was negotiated and provision was made for regional policy for peripheral areas such as Wales? Nothing in the treaty will benefit Wales; many aspects of it will be harmful to the economy of Wales and, indeed, many other parts of the west of Britain. We have read in the newspapers recently that Liverpool may be able to sidle into category 1 of the present regional policy: we do not know how Community democracy works, but, if that is true, I am glad. The best of luck to Liverpool; it deserves it. The treaty, however, contains nothing about regional policy for Wales.

Let me briefly suggest three reasons why Wales should have had a special negotiating position in respect of Maastricht and why the absence of such a position will be very damaging to the country. First, the treaty is a centralisation measure. We should forget the talk about subsidiarity; I know that there is an opt-out, but economic and monetary union is about centralisation. I have always believed, and argued with sincerity, that centralisation in the United Kingdom was bad for the economy of Wales, and other parties in the House have presented the same argument. I am sorry to say, however, that certain Members of Parliament—members of Plaid Cymru, for instance, and Liberal Democrats—are now going overboard in their support for a centralisation measure.

If it is bad to centralise the United Kingdom economy on Westminster—if that is bad for Wales—it must be bad to centralise the United Kingdom economy on Brussels.

Indeed, that must be even worse for Wales, because Wales is further along the periphery of that area. A centralisation measure is bound to be harmful. Nothing in the treaty attempts to redress the balance, however, and no attempt was made to negotiate a concession for Wales.

There is also the problem of public expenditure. I seem to remember, from the days when, years ago, I was Opposition spokesman for Wales, that Wales is probably more heavily dependent on public expenditure and employment in the public sector than England—and, perhaps, even Scotland. Money and assistance have been channelled through the public sector to areas such as Wales, which are on the periphery of the United Kingdom.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman seems to be contradicting himself. On the one hand, he says that centralisation has benefited us in Wales because we have been given resources by the United Kingdom Government. Surely he is not saying, on the other hand, that we have not benefited considerably from our membership of the European Community.

Mr. Davies: The Minister is not quite as sharp as usual. I was not contradicting myself; nor was I making as large a point as he suggests. I was merely saying that areas such as Wales are heavily dependent on public expenditure. I am sure that that is a statement of fact and I am sure that it is correct.

I am sorry to repeat myself ad nauseam, but it is clear from the Maastricht treaty—the Government accept this—that there must be a gradual reduction in public borrowing from the present 9 per cent., or whatever the figure will be on Budget day, to 3 per cent. That may take a few years. That will reduce public expenditure, which will affect Wales, because Wales is more heavily dependent on public expenditure than are many areas in England—perhaps the whole of England. That is another respect in which the treaty affects Wales directly.

It is interesting to consider the cohesion fund, which deals with the environment, the infrastructure and the railways. The treaty agrees that certain countries with a percentage below 90 per cent. of gross domestic product should be allowed more money in the cohesion fund; but that is conditional on progress towards the 3 per cent. of public borrowing and the 60 per cent. of GDP public expenditure.

Mr. Llew Smith: The right hon. Gentleman refers to 3 per cent. borrowing rates. Would not they result in public expenditure cuts of £25 billion? How could our support for such a measure link with our defence of public services such as health, education and so on, which are so important to valley communities in south Wales?

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes a very good point.

Mr. Dafis: By raising taxes.

Mr. Davies: Such expenditure can be increased by cutting public expenditure or raising taxes, but it is a narrow and inflexible choice. The Maastricht treaty demands reductions that will not be good for Wales, which is heavily dependent on public expenditure.

There must be an automatic stabiliser to the Maastricht treaty. A long time ago, a civil servant called McDougall was commissioned by the European Commission to consider the notion of a European income tax to correct imbalances in the European economy. He concluded that the EC's budget would have to be 5 per cent. or 7 per cent. of European GDP. It is now less than 2 per cent. and even after the Edinburgh summit it will not reach 2 per cent. for many years. His figure was arrived at before Spain, Portugal and Greece became members. It has now been calculated that a European budget, financed by European income tax of at least 12 per cent. of European GDP, would be required to compensate the peripheral areas of Europe—and Wales is very much a peripheral area of Europe—for the centralisation provisions of the Maastricht treaty.

Under one of the protocols we find something called the cohesion fund, which apparently can be paid, subject to progress towards the 3 per cent., to countries whose GDP is less than 90 per cent. of the average of the countries of the EC. I understand that the United Kingdom figure is probably about 93 per cent., or may be slightly higher next year if we achieve 1 per cent. growth. The latest figure for Wales puts our GDP per head at 81 per cent. or 80 per cent. of the EC average.Liverpool is about 79 per cent. Liverpool, happily, has been placed into category 1, but Wales has an average below the United Kingdom average and below the 90 per cent. and in parts of mid-Glamorgan and of my constituency—my hon. Friend the Member for Neath made a powerful speech on this in the debate on the Maastricht treaty—we are talking about a GDP per head of almost 70 per cent. or 75 per cent. Those areas get nothing from Maastricht. We shall be worse off than Spain, Greece, Portugal and, I concede to Plaid Cymru Members, Ireland, which at least was able to negotiate a better regime.

Mr. Donald Anderson: My right hon. Friend ignores the fact that, irrespective of Maastricht, the regional funds will remain and that the cohesion fund for the four countries that he mentioned was simply part of the package that was agreed at that time, which can by its very nature be only temporary because the new wave of enlargement with richer countries such as Austria and Sweden is bound to recast the basis of the cohesion fund.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend hopes that the Swedes and Norwegians will bail out the cohesion fund, but that will not happen because the Swedish economy is experiencing the same difficulties as other western European economies. It was a bad package. The question that I put to my hon. Friend is, how can he support a treaty which is so damaging to Wales and its regional development and which has been negotiated so badly that we have to ask, where was the Secretary of State for Wales and the Welsh Office when it was negotiated?

I have never believed that a centralised union was good for the Welsh economy. Five hundred years ago we joined the union of the United Kingdom. I am no great expert in history, but I believe that at that time the Welsh establishment was in favour of the union. We have since been trying to maintain our identity in that union and to ameliorate its centralising effects by getting money back. It is now proposed that we should join a European union, not even a British union.

Mr. Dafis: Is the right hon. Gentleman opposed to European union or to the way in which the Maastricht treaty and budgetary controls were negotiated? Which is it?

Mr. Davies: I oppose both the nonsense of budgetary control and the way in which these norms are written into a treaty and entrenched into a constitution, which seems ridiculous, as well as the idea of forcing countries into a centralised European union. We have spent a long time ameliorating the effect of British union on the Welsh economy. The Welsh establishment is still, as it was 500 years ago, very much in favour of the new union. Will we ever learn?

6.57 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has focused clearly on the vital issue of the Maastricht treaty—the convergence criteria that limit the amount of national debt. By stopping profligate politicians from corrupting the money supply, the treaty gives Wales and the whole of Europe the first opportunity since 1914 of sound money and fairly based economic growth.

Interestingly, the right hon. Member for Llanelli concluded with the issue of the Welsh political classes and their views on union with England or the wider Europe. One might have supposed that on St. David's day we would have been promoting, with greater enthusiasm, the benefits of Wales rather than tearing ourselves apart in the best and most highly articulate Welsh arguments about various forms of structure.

Driven by the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), I read the White Paper that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State published today. When we fall out among ourselves about the structures of government in Wales, about which there are substantial divisions, it is important to underline the achievements of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who has almost miraculously obtained general political agreement to his proposals. I am aware that various people who went along with it now wish in part to unravel it, but his success in persuading Welsh local government that unitary authorities are the necessary way forward is a considerable achievement. However, it is an achievement based, I suspect, on the recognition in most quarters that the present system set up in the 1970s is deeply flawed and has failed in practice in many ways. *[Interruption.]* It is amazing to hear the instant, ignorant, knee-jerk reaction of the Opposition when they hear a Conservative Member suggest that something done by the Conservative Government in the early 1970s was less than perfect. I have no hesitation in making such a suggestion. It was before the period of Aufklärung under Baroness Thatcher. A number of aspects of Conservative policy from the early 1970s were not successful, as has subsequently been realised.

The interesting feature of the local government reform of the 1970s was that it followed Richard Crossman's difficulties as a Minister, described in his diaries, in contemplating the problem of extending the boundaries of the city of Plymouth into the surrounding countryside of Devon. Under the pre-1974 system, there was a division between counties and county boroughs, in which there were unitary authorities, and the countryside where there was a dual system which did not work.

Despite the proud history of Abergavenny or Monmouth urban district councils, they faced and generally agreed to their extinction because their financial powers and means were so limited. There was a general welcome for the fact that something new had to happen. However, the fatal flaw of the 1974 legislation was that the model of the counties—the double tier—was imported for the first time into urban areas where there was no such tradition. It was absurd that the ancient and noble city of Cardiff should be subject to a division of its powers with south Glamorgan, as was the case in Bristol and many other great cities and towns.

In practice, the question was whether the new system would work. I hope that I strike a fairly common note of general agreement by saying that when our constituents come to see us about direct, practical problems, they genuinely do not know whether they should be seeing their county councillor or their district councillor, so they come to see their Member of Parliament. I cite the simple example of flood water coming into people's homes from the highways. The district council has drainage powers and responsibilities, the highway authority is the county council and the county council often subcontracts the district councils to deal with its highway problems. It is a confusing and unhelpful conflation of duties which has not worked.

The system has produced serious divisions and tensions between county authorities on the one hand and borough authorities and district councils on the other. Such difficulties are inherent in the complex arrangements of structure plans and borough development plans. As I understand it, the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) is opposed to the fact—as am I—that Torfaen borough council recently gave itself planning permission for an opencast coal mining exercise at Garn-yr-erw in defiance of the views of the county council and those of his neighbouring borough council. It is not satisfactory when different layers of local government have different responsibilities but no common thread.

The third issue is whether existing, large-scale county councils are felt to be sufficiently close to the people whom they represent or whether they are regarded as remote. No doubt each hon. Member has had experience of his own county council, but in Gwent the system works well in many ways, although there is a perception that the problem of weight limits in Bridge street in Usk was decided by Gwent county council for reasons that ranged more widely than the inherent interests of the people of Usk. The continuing argument about the Chepstow bypass, which is so badly needed, is another example of a case in which it is perceived that Gwent county council covers too large an area to be able to decide the outcome.

When I spoke about Monmouthshire in an intervention, I think it was the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr.Rogers) who said that I should be aware that Monmouthshire is not what it was. Of course, he is historically correct. The new Monmouthshire created under the proposals is not the old Gwent and certainly not the old Monmouthshire before it. However, it reflects the large rural area in my constituency.

At the moment, we have a council, originally a district council and termed a borough council for want of a better expression, but a borough council representing four ancient boroughs within it and a very wide rural area. It is far better to call the council what it should be—a shire county council to be called Monmouthshire. It reflects the reality and the division that has grown up in the past 150 years in the area that was formerly Gwent.

Mr. Flynn: In an earlier intervention, the hon. Gentleman made a plea for the retention of the lord lieutenant of Monmouthshire. Will he make it clear what he means? Is he suggesting that we have a separate lord lieutenant for Monmouthshire, one for the new Newport area, one for the Heads of the Valleys area and another for Torfaen?

Mr. Evans: I am indeed.

Mr. Flynn: Is it a job creation programme for lord lieutenants?

Mr. Evans: Not at all. From the hon. Gentleman's opening remark, it is clear that he misunderstood what I said on the previous occasion. However, he is right to think that I believe strongly that a city and county such as Cardiff should be independently represented by a representative of the Crown. It should have its own high sheriff. I am sure that the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) will agree that it would be inconceivable to treat Newport any differently from Cardiff these days. Once we have accepted that, it would be eminently sensible to grant each new unitary authority its own lord lieutenancy and high shrievalty. Those offices are much appreciated and serve a very valuable function.

The present distinguished gentleman who is the lord lieutenant of Gwent is unhappy at the prospect of being divided. He is a well-known and popular figure. But there is a strong feeling that it is consistent with tradition and with the thrust of the proposals that there should be a proper shire authority in Monmouth, properly constituted on traditional lines.

Some of the proposals in the White Paper are interesting, but rather vague. I should be grateful for clarification of some issues, although I appreciate that the clarification may not be offered now. First, what happens to education? I do not believe that the so-called democratic control of schooling has been a happy experiment. I believe that it has been fairly disastrous and Conservative Members at least would prefer schooling to be taken wholly out of local authority hands. At the moment, it is unclear to what extent the proposals, in conjunction with other Government measures, will create that happier and better state, so the position must be clarified.

The second issue involves the social services responsibilities of county councils. Far from praising democratic accountability, Conservative Members would prefer such services to be run by authorities similar to the health trusts or authorities which are professionally organised and not meddled with by politicians. Again, there is scope for clarification.

My final tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is that he has fulfilled, in a most important and imaginative way, one of the pledges in the Communist party manifesto of 1848, which was to abolish the conflict between town and countryside. He will happily have done that in Monmouthshire by granting us the Monmouthshire council and my constituents will be very pleased. They say no to a Welsh assembly, but definitely yes to the new Monmouthshire authority.

7.8 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): It is becoming a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), although I do not agree with everything that he said about local government reform. I am pleased for Monmouthshire. I hope that I and the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) will have his support in our attempts to retain our old shire counties. I shall return to that point.

I am relieved to have followed the hon. Member for Monmouth rather than the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards). His speech was so full of odium and bile that it would have been a surprise had he not already made it clear that he was making an attempt to be one of the least-liked Members of Parliament. I am sorry that he has now left the Chamber—something that he criticises everyone in sight for doing. I feel no compunction about criticising him in his absence in that respect. I noticed that during his more extravagant and wild criticisms, even his daffodil managed to turn its head away from him.

The St. David's day debate is an occasion on which we should do a little bit of talking Wales up, a point echoed by the hon. Member for Monmouth. Wales has tremendous advantages to offer. Wales welcomes people who come to live there from outside. I returned to Wales 30 or so years after having been born there and we and many other families found a welcome in Wales. There have been recent stories of entirely contemptible threats to incomers which are not typical of Wales. People in Wales deplore the extremist behaviour about which there was some talk earlier. I hasten to add that I accept entirely the point made by Plaid Cymru Members that such threats have nothing to do with them.

Wales has an environment second to none, with a beautiful landscape and not a bad climate. When it is warm it is warm; when it is wet, it does not trick people: they know that it is wet.

Wales has had a good educational tradition. Although the Government—I would deal with this point at greater length if there was more time—have started to dilute the education system's effectiveness in Wales, the strong tradition of good education and the belief in education in Wales will continue to serve us well.

Wales has energy resources. It has coal, although that resource is unfortunately now being neglected by the Government in an energy strategy which I believe to be unwise. I believe that the policy will be reviewed in years to come. Wales has water—plenty of it—and some has already been harnessed in imaginative schemes for the generation of power. Although we are not all happy about the developments off the coast of Wales, it appears that there are likely to be reserves of coal and of gas which will add to the prosperity of Wales and of the whole of the United Kingdom.

Wales has what I call the four "Es": environment, education, energy and enthusiasm. It has an enthusiastic work force, who suffer from too great unemployment. Those in work are often underpaid because Wales has a low-pay economy. However, as many foreign companies have found, the work force is willing to work effectively for whoever brings industry into Wales. We can say, on this St. David's day, that Wales offers as much—I believe more—to those who wish to find somewhere to bring businesses and to create prosperity as does any other part of the United Kingdom and possibly any other part of Europe.

Unfortunately, Wales also faces increasing problems, and I shall draw attention to just a few of them. It faces a problem of debt. The number of mortgage repossessions in Wales in the past two years is 17,826, which is a shocking figure. It is indicative of the economic climate that Welsh

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people have had to sufer. Research has shown that the greatest contributory factor to mortgage repossessions has been the unresolved reduction in income.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I do not make light of the hon. and learned Gentleman's point about mortgage repossessions. I am sure that, like me, he welcomes the news that during the past six months there has been a remarkable reduction in the level of repossessions. That is some good news against which to set his remarks.

Mr. Carlile: I am pleased by any news of a reduction in mortgage repossessions. The figure has been shockingly high. The evidence shows tht 23·8 per cent. of mortgage repossessions have been as a direct result of the unresolved reduction of income, a fact which shows that there is continuing uncertainty. Even when building societies foreclose, the families involved face desperate uncertainty.

We have the connected problem of a lack of council housing and other housing to rent in Wales. In 1979 in Wales, 29 per cent. of all occupied dwellings were council houses. In 1991, the figure was 17 per cent. In 1988, 30,804 council houses were renovated by local authorities. Some four years later, only about 23,000 were renovated. I accept, of course, that more is being done through the housing association movement, but I believe that that movement is not meeting the shortfall and, as a result, there is increasing homelessness in Wales.

It is estimated that in 1991 more than 60,000 people in Wales were experiencing homelessness. The homeless who come to our surgeries include young men and women, often in jobs, who are forced to drift from sofa to sofa, where friends allow them to rest their heads. I do not believe that the House regards that as satisfactory.

We have a problem of unemployment. The national average for unemployment in the United Kingdom was 10·6 per cent. in January 1993, within an overall figure of more than 3 million. Some 20 constituencies in Wales are above that figure, which is unacceptable, especially when one bears in mind the fact that the Treasury estimate, confirmed by the Secretary of State for Employment in evidence to the Select Committee on Employment, is that it costs £9,200 per annum per unemployed person in social security payments and loss of revenue from taxation.

There are also indirect costs. It has been proved beyond doubt that high unemployment correlates with a high level of homelessness. Shelter has shown that. It correlates with a high level of marriage breakdown, as Relate has shown. It correlates with a high level of suicide and illness, as the Campaign for Work has shown. There is a worrying increase in suicide among farmers as they become progressively unemployed.

It has also been shown that high unemployment corrrelates with a high level of crime. We used to debate whether that was true, but now even the Metropolitan police emphasise strongly that it is true.

Mr. Sweeney: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the apparent correlation between rising unemployment and poverty and a rise in crime is merely a correlation? We have seen crime rising during periods of prosperity. Crime rose during the record period of eight years of sustained growth of the 1980s. It is rather dangerous to extrapolate from the recent increases in crime the theory that unemployment or poverty is responsible.

Mr. Carlile: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says. With respect, I prefer the evidence given by the deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan police to his theory.

We also have the problem of transport deficit in Wales. The privatisation of British Rail is seen as a serious threat to rural transport. The future of the Birmingham to Aberystwyth railway line is unlikely to be secured as a result of privatisation. Privatisation of itself does not concern me so much as our essential need to hear from the Government a real commitment not simply to the status quo on that line, but to seeing that there is some development of it. The environmental damage that is done to villages throughout rural Wales by trundling articulated lorries could be greatly alleviated, for example, if goods were carried on the railways. Goods are now off the railways.

I mentioned crime. That brings me to another, connected question—the structure of the police. There is a lateral reference in today's White Paper on local government to the future of police forces in Wales. The Home Office is reviewing those forces. In addition to the £65 to £150 million of extra money which will be spent on local government reform, I hope that we will not see another £10 or £15 million spent on reforming police forces which already do a good job.

I refer specifically to the Dyfed-Powys police which, against manpower cuts in real terms, is doing a phenomenally successful job. It has civilianised, it has developed new technology and it carries out community policing with skill. Its chief constable has placed great emphasis on a management culture which works. Above all, it is catching a greater percentage of criminals than any other police force in the country. It would be absurd to abolish that police force. Surely it should be the model for new police forces, not the victim of centralising tendencies.

This is a sad St. David's day for me. I am one in an only briefly interrupted long line of Liberals who have represented the great historic county of Montgomeryshire. Montgomeryshire has Norman origins. If one were to walk with me on a summer's day up to Montgomery castle and look down on the scene as it spreads around into Shropshire or the west of Wales, one would look on a scene which has been Montgomeryshire almost always, and for much longer than anyone alive today can remember. One would look on a scene which is recorded in the annals of history as Montgomeryshire—Sir Trefaldwyn.

The county has a history of great assizes and quarter sessions and has contributed musicians, poets and, dare I say it, the odd lawyer, great teachers and doctors to the whole of the United Kingdom. Twenty years after the creation of the white elephant of Powys, there still exists a real pride in Montgomeryshire. When Montgomery district council chose to change its name to Montgomeryshire district council, it attracted wide approval and caused much rejoicing.

The Secretary of State may want to get rid of the Sir Trefaldwyn, but I can promise that he will have a fight before he does so. He will never get rid of the spirit of Montgomeryshire, which is called Mwynder Maldwyn.

Why do the Government want to fly in the face of the will of the people? How can the Secretary of State square it with his conscience that he said with one breath,

"We are interested in local government based on natural communities",

and yet with the other breath he destroys one of the most natural communities in Wales, Montgomeryshire?

How can the Secretary of State for Wales justify having one local authority in Wales which is twice the size of the second biggest proposed authority—509,000 hectares against 262,000 hectares? I advise the Ministers on the Front Bench to think again. If they do not think again, they will find that their permanent epitaph in Montgomeryshire at least will be as "those who destroyed Montgomeryshire".

I end with five substantive points. These are not emotional. They are not about history or the spirit of Montgomeryshire. They are facts which might help the Secretary of State to change his mind and decide to have a unitary authority in Montgomeryshire.

First, I remind the Secretary of State that Montgomeryshire has been one of the lowest rated or charging authorities in Wales for many years. Secondly, it has a council which has always spent at or below its standard spending assessment or earlier targets. Thirdly, in its submission to the Welsh Office in the autumn of 1991, Montgomeryshire district council showed projected savings for a Montgomeryshire unitary authority of £1 million per annum as compared to Powys. That is equivalent to £25 off the community charge. That submission was used by many other authorities in Wales and set the tone for some of them.

Fourthly, the submission from the present Powys county council showed no similar projected savings. I challenge the Secretary of State to show in his White Paper any projected savings from the Powys council with which he is proposing to tinker. Fifthly, despite Montgomeryshire's excellent record as a low-spending authority, it has shown that it can provide service, with significant capital projects such as the £3 million Bro Ddyfi leisure centre, the £4 million leisure centre at Welshpool which enjoys the name The Flash, the Montgomeryshire airport and village workshops which are distributed throughout the county and which have brought employment through Montgomeryshire district council in places where it might never have appeared. Those points seem to be facts which can be relied on as evidence in favour of Montgomeryshire.

We have been told that there will be yet another meeting of the Welsh Grand Committee. It will be a showpiece meeting in Cardiff next Monday. I want none of it. I am fed up with that talking shop. We do not want to go to Cardiff to a powerless, gutless meeting in which the Government—even if the meeting votes against them, as it always does in the Welsh Grand Committee—will simply ride roughshod over its will.

I will go to Cardiff to meetings when there is at least an element of democracy and when we can change things in Wales through those meetings, but I will not go to a meeting which will simply give the Secretary of State the opportunity to make a few more glib announcements and tell us for a second time what he said this afternoon without our having the opportunity to amend it.

Wales is a great country, but it will not become any greater with the White Paper announced today—especially if we destroy our natural communities and, above all, if we do not attend to the urgent needs and problems of Wales.

7.28 pm

Mr. Walter Sweeney (Vale of Glamorgan): I have listened with great interest to the remarks of the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). I know that they are shared by my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans).

I should like to put the issue of the White Paper in context by praising it as strongly as I possibly can so far as it affects my own constituency of the Vale of Glamorgan. In the past couple of years since my election, I have been inundated with letters, telephone calls and visits to surgeries from people who have been anxious about the future of the Vale of Glamorgan and who have felt deeply concerned about the prospect of being swallowed up by Cardiff.

The rather cynical decision of South Glamorgan county council to spend probably large sums of public money erecting new signposts all over the Vale of Glamorgan proclaiming, "For Cardiff and the Vale" aroused considerable resentment among people. They felt that it was a little late for South Glamorgan county council to start worrying about the vale when previously it had demonstrated only too clearly its preoccupation with Cardiff. Those people will be delighted with today's news. They could not have had better news to help them celebrate St. David's day.

Law and order has been touched on several times in the debate. Mention was made of the prospect of creating a secure unit for young offenders to serve the South Glamorgan area. Recently there has been considerable debate in the press about where the blame should lie for the fact that we do not as yet have a much needed secure unit to serve magistrates courts in that part of Wales.

It should be placed on record that when I inquired about the secure unit early last year I was advised that money was on the table from the Welsh Office for the provision of a secure unit but that South Glamorgan county council was being obstructive. It had failed to get round the table and get on with the job of providing that secure unit. I corresponded with South Glamorgan county council to find out whether that was true.

I was advised that the county council did not like the type of secure unit which the Welsh Office envisaged. It thought that it was too large and impersonal and that it would be better to have a small secure unit to serve South Glamorgan. I strongly disagree with that view. The argument adduced by South Glamorgan county council was that putting people into a large unit encouraged them in a life of crime; it introduced them to experts on crime who would train them to become more criminal than they were on admission.

That argument ignores the fact that by the time young offenders end up at a secure unit, the chances are that they are already highly experienced in the art of crime. One of the problems is that many of them have had several cautions before they even encounter the judicial process. I spoke to a trainee magistrate at Barry magistrates court who had been told to expect on first encountering juveniles in the judicial process that they would have had six or even eight cautions. That is appalling and we must address it.

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A caution should be regarded as a last chance. If young people are given a caution, they should realise that the next time that they get into mischief they will go to court. Otherwise, a caution is simply seen as a pat on the head. Young people get away with committing an offence simply because they admit it and their parents consent to the administering of a caution. They keep getting away with it. We must impose a finite limit on the number of cautions that can be given to juveniles before they are charged with an offence.

An Opposition Member said that in recent years the number of police had increased by only 3 per cent. That ignores the considerable increase in resources for the police which our Government have provided, the enormous increase in real terms in the salaries paid to the police and the considerable civilianisation of the police. Civilianisation has helped to make police officers more efficient. It allows them to delegate some parts of their duties to white collar workers at police stations.

However, I freely acknowledge that we do not have enough police officers. We certainly do not have enough in my part of Wales, where we have seen a rapid escalation in crime, especially burglaries and crimes involving vehicles—taking vehicles without consent, theft of vehicles and taking property from vehicles.

I welcome the initiatives which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has announced for dealing with the problem of law and order. It is the most important problem that we face in Wales, and indeed in the rest of the United Kingdom. It affects people's confidence. If people believe, rightly or wrongly, that it is not safe to go out into the streets, they are not happy as citizens.

The speech of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been referred to. He said that we needed more condemnation and less understanding. That remark has been misinterpreted. My right hon. Friend meant that we must pay less attention to the do-gooders whose prime concern is keeping the villains first out of court and then out of custody, and more attention to the needs of victims. After all, where should our true concern lie in a compassionate society? Surely it should lie with the person who suffers as a victim of crime. We should worry more about such people and less about the people who cause the suffering.

The debate on law and order boils down to the need to spell out to our young people the difference between right and wrong. One of the problems that we encounter is that we now have a generation of parents who, in many cases, grew up without sufficient discipline in the home or the fundamental understanding of the difference between right and wrong.

Hon. Members have referred to the correlation between crime and rising unemployment. If I understood him correctly, the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery said that unemployment led to a rise in crime. It is perfectly true that unemployment has risen and crime has risen, but it is wrong to jump to the conclusion that the one follows from the other. As a criminologist, I certainly am not aware of any single factor which is an overrding cause of the increase in crime. I am sure that if I did, I would earn a fortune as a consultant.

It is essential that we grapple with the root causes of crime. We must tackle it among younger people. The age of criminal responsibility is 10. We all know from anecdotal evidence that most children know the difference between right and wrong earlier than 10. But they are not criminally responsible. We must bring pressure to bear on parents to take responsibility for their children and make sure that they grow up knowing the difference between right and wrong.

The Government have already made some progress in making parents responsible by, for example, making them responsible for the payment of fines imposed on their children. That was a sensible move. The difficulty is that the fine is assessed on the basis of the child's means, not on the means of the parents. If a child has pocket money of, say, £2 a week, clearly the maximum instalment of fine that could be imposed is £2 a week. If the parents are working, £2 a week out of their income is a derisory amount.

I would like the Government to tackle the question whether the parents exercise appropriate supervision over their children. In Llantwit Major, in my constituency, children wander the streets at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. I cannot believe that they are not up to no good wandering the streets at that time of night. When I mitigate on their behalf and those children enter a plea of guilty, I ask them for an explanation of their criminal behaviour. The most common answer is, "I did it because I was bored." What right has any parent to allow their children to wander the streets and get bored in the early hours of the morning? Any parents worth their salt should see that their children are at home and in bed.

I believe that a statutory offence should be created to charge parents who wilfully neglect their children. I know that there are parents who are totally inadequate or incapable of coping, and if they can produce medical evidence to that effect, they should be acquitted of that charge. The Government have introduced legislation whereby parents can be bound over to ensure that their children keep the peace. That is a worthwhile and useful law, but we need to go further and we should be able to impose penalties on parents who fail to control their children.

If we in Wales, and people elsewhere, can get to grips with the problem of law and order, we will dramatically increase people's confidence in the way in which Wales and the rest of the United Kingdom is run. I am particularly concerned about the effect of lawlessness on old people. They often complain to me that their cars have been vandalised, their windows broken or their homes burgled. Some have even been horribly assaulted. We have all seen the gruesome pictures in our newspapers of the battered faces of septuagenarian and octogenarian members of our society. I do not believe that the young people responsible should be allowed to get off the hook by blaming it all on unemployment or boredom. We must get our priorities right and tell people the difference between right and wrong.

7.41 pm

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I should like to make a number of preliminary remarks before I come to the main thrust of my speech, which must be about, unfortunately, unemployment in Wales.

My first point relates to the patients charter produced by the Government. I would like the contents of a Welsh

Office circular issued in 1991 regarding the discharge procedures for elderly people from hospitals to private nursing homes to be included in it. That circular states that there is no need for any elderly person to be means-tested and discharged from a hospital to a private nursing home if that elderly person or his or her relatives do not wish to be means-tested. It is the responsibility of the health authority to pay in full for the private nursing home, or it must find a hospital bed for that patient. I would therefore like the patients charter to be amended so that the main thrust of the circular is included in it.

I would also like the patients charter for Wales to explain certain rights that exist for people who are encountering difficulties in obtaining dental treatment under the national health service from their general dental practitioner. They should not have to worry about whether a salaried dentist is available, employed by the family health service authority. They should be able to make use of the community dental service, which is financed by health authorities, which are, in turn, financed by the Welsh Office. Anyone in Wales who needs dental services can receive full treatment from the available community dental facilities.

If the Government had the wherewithal—I mean if they had the courage—to include in the patients charter the contents of the two Government circulars, they know very well what would happen. The actue bed service in the NHS would collapse virtually overnight, as would the community dental service. However, those circulars exist and that means that people who know their rights know that their relatives can stay in hospital beds, financed by the NHS. In the same way, those who know the law relating to community dental services can enjoy those services. Those people do not have to go privately to a general dental practitioner, who may refuse to take them on. They can enjoy the benefits of the community dental service.

When the Minister replies to such debates, he always covers every pont that I have ever raised. I hope that he will continue that tradition on this great St. David's day. If he made a commitment to include those circular details in the patients charter, he would be the hero of Wales and he would be able to wear his leek with dignity, as he does so well.

I look forward to what will happen when the GP fund holder, that new animal, comes into being in Wales. I hope that the Minister is preparing a leaflet about that. It should not necessarily be dropped from aircraft, as that could cause litter, as he well knows. It should be distributed widely throughout Wales to tell people what they can get from their fund holding GP.

Imagine if the Minister told every patient of a potential GP fund holder that he could say to that person, "Doctor, bach, I would like the following things in the next few weeks. For mother, I would like the following list of pills, which would benefit her enormously. For father, similarly, I would like this. For myself, I would like a little treatment and here is the name of the surgeon I would like to see; and, by the way, this is the anaesthetist that I would like for that op."

The Minister and the House know that when the GP fund holders of Wales and Britain really know what they have let themselves in for, when they are inundated with patients exercising patient power and negotiating what services they want, those GPs will not be as happy as they are now.

I was delighted that the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) were present at the opening of part of the missing gap of the M4 between Earlswood and Lon Las on Friday morning. I thank the Minister warmly for the kind invitation which he extended to me.

The M4 is the only motorway in Britain that had a gap of four miles about 30 miles from its western end. Today there is still a two-mile gap before we have a complete motorway from Pont Abraham all the way to London. The Minister is doing well, however, and I am glad to note that by 1995—after all, the Government have only been in power since 1979—the missing gap on the M4 will have been filled. I hope that when that great event occurs and we at last have a motorway from Pont Abraham to Hammersmith, inward investment—which has been lyrically mentioned in the House and has become a continuous drip over a long time to give a flavour to the Welsh debates—will flood across the Briton Ferry bridge. Inward investors can use places such as the monument —it still has a roof, so it cannot be called an ancient monument in the strict sense of the term; perhaps it is an historic building—of the Felindre tinplate works, which can eventually be put to good use. I am pleased that the project is now on target, and I hope that the Minister will fill the missing gap by 1995.

The Secretary of State must answer the question: how far are he and his Government prepared to let Wales—especially the 139,500 unemployed people—sink before statesmanship, a coherent, long-term economic strategy and effective policies to deal with the deep employment crisis are visible from Nos. 10 and 11 Downing street? The endless, aimless, leaderless lack of policy and purpose betrays the efforts of business and workers in Wales today. Public spending is sky high, but there is no forward planning or strategy to improve the economy or industrial activity through spending.

The cost to Wales alone of keeping almost 140,000 people on the dole is just over £9,000 for each person. It costs the Chancellor well over £1 billion. However, we are not talking merely of financial costs. Employment provides purpose, pride and an identity that unemployment denies. Employment provides the confidence and spending power that will encourage the return of consumer confidence to get the economy moving again.

The Government seek to increase their revenues by privatising coal and the railways, by shedding public accountability and responsibility for public services such as the Driver Vehicle Licensing Authority in Swansea, the DVOIT and the vehicle testing stations. In doing so they introduce a demoralising tone into the local job market in Swansea—in the constituencies of my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, East and of my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). The Government also seek to raise revenue by increasing the rate of oil and gas extraction, and encouraging exploration perilously close to vulnerable beaches in Cardiganshire, Pembrokeshire and my constituency of Gower.

Now the Government are raising revenue by taxing, as income, payments for redundancy counselling paid by firms to help their staff when they are made redundant. Such petty-minded penny-pinching is offensive. It was bad enough, throughout 1992, when the Government watched aimlessly as 2,425 businesses went under and job losses climbed remorselessly, but now they want to make a fast few pounds by taxing, as income, costs spent by an

[Mr. Gareth Wardell]

employer on easing the difficulties faced by redundant people. I hope that the Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister will draw the Chancellor's attention to early-day motion 1269, which stands in my name and is supported by 65 hon. Members. It calls for changes in this year's Budget to eradicate that idiotic policy.

In the Budget we need measures to combat unemployment, which means, first and foremost, a reversal of the announced changes in the employment training budget that are to come into effect on 1 April this year. The first change will be that, from April, the training and enterprise schemes, which have provided so much support to unemployed people who want to start their own businesses, will be available only to those who have been out of work for six months. In Swansea, GP Services—through short and intensive business training courses several of my constituents have been helped to start up successful businesses and keep them on the right lines—estimates that half of the start-up businesses that receive training assistance at present will be ineligible for help under the new scheme. GP Services has found that the majority of people who intend starting up on their own do so as soon as possible after losing their job. They are the most enterprising of new starters and the ones most likely to succeed.

If a worker is made redundant and has £10,000 redundancy pay, it disqualifies him from state benefit. If he has to wait six months for enterprise training, he will have no capital left. If he has been unsuccessfully applying for jobs during that time, his confidence will have been shaken and his home ownership may be threatened. No amount of compulsory counselling by the employment service will alter that. It defies belief that the Government think that introducing a six-month delay in providing help to the most hopeful squares with their professed aim of encouraging enterprise in the economy. The Government can demonstrate their genuine support for enterprise in Wales by immediately withdrawing the proposed change.

When the Minister replies, I hope that, in the time-honoured fashion, he will respond to all the points that I have made. I hope that he will announce this evening that he can vouch for the fact that he will do what I am urging him to do.

Unemployment among 16 and 17-year-olds continues to rise, despite repeated promises that all youngsters in that age group would be guaranteed an employment training place. Research shows that one in three 16 to 17-year-olds is now out of work and that one third of the job losses that have occurred during the recession have been suffered by teenagers. An estimated 1 million young people under 25 years of age are now unemployed.

Mr. Richards: What is the hon. Gentleman's understanding of the Labour party's strategy for the so-called regeneration of the Welsh economy as claimed by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies)?

Mr. Wardell: That intervention has no relevance whatever to the point that I was making. I do not intend to follow the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) and end up making the sort of speech that he made earlier. I was just going to say that many of those young people have never worked in proper jobs in their lives. We are talking about a lost generation—a disaster that we ignore at our peril. The hon. Gentleman should not try to make party-political points. I am sure that the young people of Wales will not thank him for that. I am merely pointing out that, by looking only at the short term, the Government ignore this generation at their peril.

Such a massive dislocation and abandonment of the talents of such large numbers of young people is bound to affect the fabric of society. Young people become more and more disillusioned and despairing as they see their chances of a job or a training opportunity decline as the number of job losses increases. Yet during the recession the Government have cut the number of training places by more than 100,000. Such a policy defies logic. For the benefit of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West, may I point out that I am looking forward in the Budget to a reversal of this part of what the Government have been doing. It is a disgrace that the Government should make it a condition of a young person's receiving benefit that he must first be on a training programme when the training places do not exist.

Thirdly, I am worried about the long-term unemployed. It is appalling that more than 1 million people should have been unemployed for more than a year. The only jobs initiative that the Government have offered during the recession has been the employment action schemes—a promise of 30,000 training jobs by March 1992. The promise was not delivered. In Wales, only 2,000 places have become available—2,000, for 139,000 unemployed.

As from April, a new training for work scheme comes into force. The ideas behind it represent a reversal and a betrayal of promises to the unemployed and the electorate. The first U-turn that the Government have made is to abandon the commitment to securing CBI-sponsored national education and training targets. The second about-turn has been cutting the link between the national vocational qualification schemes and training. Both measures went a long way to ensuring that employment training was meaningful and that trainees gained a recognised qualification at the end of a properly constructed and organised course. That quality control is to cease. Instead, and by way of part replacement, the Government are giving more money to the employment service. The money will be used not for training people in new marketable skills but for compulsory counselling and confidence-building schemes. It seems to me that the employment service is planning a great confidence trick of its own. It is cutting training places and cutting out the standards and controls of quality among the remaining places. Instead, it seeks a cheap way of dealing with more jobless people.

The unemployed do not want counselling about why they cannot get a job. They know that there are no jobs and that, in Wales, with about 20 people chasing every vacancy, a skill is basic equipment. They do not need compulsory attendance at counselling sessions to have that explained to them.

As for confidence building, the best confidence boost for the long-term unemployed is a job. I trust that the Secretary of State will tell the Chancellor that if he cannot announce on 16 March worthwhile, meaningful schemes to get people in Wales back to working for Britain's prosperity, he may as well abandon the Budget until the autumn. If he cannot get Britain back to work, he cannot restore confidence in the economy; and if he cannot restore

confidence in the economy, he will oversee more lost jobs as we spiral into ever deeper recession and ever higher spending to keep the unemployed on the dole.

I hope that the Secretary of State or the Minister will respond to some of my points, but I am certain of one thing: the Government must identify the basic industries of the next century, such as biotechnology and the other rapid growth industries of tomorrow. They must put in place the necessary tax breaks and restore confidence for the future. If they do not do these things, the country will have to adjust to a lower standard of living, which I am sure no one wants. Economic growth needs to be at the centre of the Government's proposals, and some of the remarks that I have made this evening point in that direction.

8.5 pm

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): It is always a great pleasure to follow the eloquent hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell). During the short time I have been a Member of this House I have come to know him as an hon. Gentleman of the highest integrity. No doubt it was that integrity that led him to the admission in his speech that public spending stands, as he put it, sky high. That being so, what was the prescription that we heard from the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman for the way out of the real difficulties facing us as a nation and in Wales? The hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) proposed more money for councils; more money for social security. He also proposed statutorily imposed higher wages—or so it seemed from his complaint about wages in the Welsh economy. He did not even shy away from complaints about the police and law and order—a bit rich from an Opposition Member. I wonder how far back Opposition Members' memories go. Mine goes back to the 1970s. Have they spoken to people who were in the police then? They would remind them of the despair in the police force during the 1970s, following years of underspending on the police service.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) made a pertinent remark about the crime problem. Society should highlight not only citizens' rights, although they are important and must be defended in this Chamber; we should stress that parents have responsibilities too, an aspect that has unfortunately been left out in recent years.

It was perhaps inevitable that we should hear one other plea from Opposition Members on St. David's day. They are united in asking for a Welsh assembly, as they call it. It was of course on a St. David's day in the mid-1970s that the St. David's day declaration that Wales demanded a Welsh assembly was published. It was drawn up by all the people who considered themselves leading authorities—academics, churchmen, Labour politicians, trade unionists and many others who liked to feel that they represented the people of Wales and who claimed so often that they did. Only a few years later did Wales have its opportunity to vote on that proposition. I remember it because I was involved in the campaign. It was one of the few occasions on which I shared the same side of an argument as the right hon. Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock). Wales did not support the propositions that were presented for such a long time by those who are now in Opposition. The contrary was the case. The vote was four to one against—an 80 per cent. rejection. Not one county in the Principality was prepared to support the proposals.

Opposition parties subsequently promoted the Welsh assembly proposal. Why are they so reluctant to promise to put the matter to a referendum? The proposition for a Welsh assembly was decisively rejected by the people of Wales and if the Opposition have new proposals they should subject them to the popular will. It seems that this time there would be a Welsh assembly but no referendum. That exposes the bankruptcy of Opposition arguments about a Welsh assembly.

It is inevitable that in such a debate our attention should turn to the fundamental issue that unites us all—unemployment in Wales. The hon. Member for Gower and other hon. Members spoke about that. The Opposition have made some extravagant claims. They often speak about unemployment in the valleys and I am the first to recognise that there is high unemployment in many parts of the valleys. It is arrogant of the Opposition to presume that they are the only people in the House who speak for the valleys. I have the distinction of having a valley community in my constituency, if I am able to retain it following local government reorganisation. I shall make a few observations about that.

As the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) knows, I speak for the valley community of Ystradgynlais, which I hope will be considered and recognised as such by the Opposition. Last Friday I visited that community and saw in the local library a project that has been given an award by Environment Wales. It is the Ystradgynlais 2000 project and involves the local community in identifying its exact historic roots and what its future should be. That community probably owes its existence to iron, steel and anthracite mining. Those industries died out in that area but the post war period brought to the area Smiths Industries which manufactured clocks and watches. It remained there for many years until the late 1970s. Following that a new diversified job opportunity structure had to be created. Fortunately, that community is within the area of the Development Board for Rural Wales and, as many hon. Members will know, Lucas has been involved in expanding its operation in the area. In recent weeks the development board has worked with Morris Cohen, which supplies Marks and Spencer, and that has created more job opportunities.

Many statistics have been quoted and it is important to stress the key to addressing unemployment. That valley community, cheek by jowl with many communities represented by the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain), has a male unemployment rate of 9·1 per cent. I agree that that is unacceptable, but it is below the national average of 14·4 per cent. The female unemployment rate is 3·9 per cent., giving an overal rate of 7·1 per cent. compared with the national rate of 10·7 per cent.

The people in Ystradgynlais recognise that the policies to assist job creation in the area have been successful. No doubt that is why they are anxious to remain within the structure that gives them that support. I shall say more about that later. Of course it is not only in Ystradgynlais that that support is available. In the past month it was announced in Presteigne, on the Shropshire border of my constituency, that a company in the forefront of microwave technology, Labtech, was creating 100 new jobs. Such matters should not be dismissed by the Opposition who have stressed how important it is to look

[Mr. Jonathan Evans]

to the direction from which new jobs will come. That company and many others such as Motorway Remoulds, which employs 152 people in my constituency in Knighton, have secured contracts abroad by going out to look for business. Kayes in Presteigne has obtained work from an export drive in France and Sweden.

It is generally considered that many job opportunities in rural Wales are directly attached to agriculture which, of course, underpins the local economy. However, there are other ways in which job opportunities can be created and the work undertaken by the Development Board for Rural Wales, supported by the Welsh Office, has been crucial in underpinning those job opportunities in my constituency. The Secretary of State has recognised that there should be a specific initiative, his own rural initiative, the details of which he recently announced to the Welsh Grand Committee. Some of us in the rural parts of Wales are a little disappointed that a proportion of the money for that initiative is to be spent in the constituency of the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) because that will diminish the pot for the rest of rural Wales, although I do not begrudge the hon. Gentleman a penny of that money. The projects supported by that initiative are important.

Mr. Dafis: Some of that money will come to my constituency.

Mr. Evans: I am delighted to hear that.

Mr. Ainger: I understand the hon. Gentleman's disappointment that the West Wales task force has top sliced £2·5 million from the total budget of £6·6 million for the rural initiative. Does he agree that the schemes for which he will be seeking support from the rural initiative should be supported by that initiative and that the restructuring of the west Wales economy that is required by the task force should be funded not by the initiative but by completely new Welsh Office money?

Mr. Evans: I shall leave the hon. Member for Pembroke to conduct his own negotiations with the Secretary of State, not through me. We can make common cause on the fact that we would have preferred the overall rural initiative budget to remain at £6·6 million.

There are other ways in which support for infrastructure can be secured. I referred to those in interventions. I was pleased that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade proposed that rural Wales, comprising the four rural counties, should be designated for objective 1 status. I presume that all hon. Members were disappointed to note that when the European Commission subsequently presented to the Council of Ministers the list of areas that are apparently to be recommended for that status, the only two on the list were Merseyside and the Scottish highlands and islands. The President of the Board of Trade has subsequently made it clear that, when he goes to the Council of Ministers, he intends to continue to press the case for rural Wales and, through my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I should like to encourage him because rural Wales needs such assistance.

The housing situation has already been mentioned. I recognise—I would, would I not—the difficulties that there are in providing adequate housing for the homeless throughout Wales. However, insufficient attention has been given to the work that has been undertaken by housing associations, particularly the Mid-Wales housing association—here I gently chide the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), who is my neighbour. I had talks with that housing association, which operates both within my constituency and his, a few weeks ago and it was particularly grateful for the £1 million of extra funding that was made available out of the £750 million that was announced by the Chancellor in the autumn statement. I know that that was useful and will enable it to make additional housing provision.

That is not to say that any of this is ever enough. We must try to address the problems caused by homelessness. The rough sleepers initiative in London has been very successful. Although the phenomenon of rough sleeping in London is regularly raised, the numbers sleeping rough have diminished, substantially as a result of that initiative. Among those engaged in housing matters, the initiative is widely supported and praised. I wish to see a similar project in Wales. At the moment it is geared towards the metropolis and there is no equivalent structure in Wales, even though we all recognise that homelessness is a problem in Wales and even manifests itself in some rural areas.

I am bound to end my speech by referring to the statement on local government made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State this afternoon. I hope that the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery will not take it amiss if I say that this is the second occasion on which I have found something in a speech of his with which I am able to agree. In the Welsh Grand Committee, I praised his speech and I hope that he will not find it an embarrassment in his constituency if I do so on a second occasion today. He was right in what he said about the reaction in mid-Wales to the statement made by the Secretary of State.

Within my constituency, the town of Brecon, so long the county town of Breconshire, is this year celebrating its 900th anniversary and had been hoping to do so within the context of the return to Breconshire as a unitary authority. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for agreeing to meet representatives from it, as he also met representatives of Radnor district council. Those discussions took place within the context of the consultation document—a document that speaks of local government being relevant to local communities and in touch with them.

I do not wish to be churlish about Powys county council. The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery went rather further in calling it a white elephant than I dare to go because I think that Powys county council has suffered substantially—for example, through lack of morale—ever since the consultation paper was announced. I do not begrudge it the feeling of relief that it may have today. However, elsewhere beyond county hall, there is no doubt that the Secretary of State's announcement will be greeted with dismay in my constituency.

Conservative Members have spoken about extending the role of local government. In that context, the size of the authorities is of far less importance than the way in which those authorities are in touch with the people whom they serve. I sought to make that point to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State before he made his announcement. I am sure that the announcement will be substantially fought in mid-Wales and my right hon. Friend will hear many further representations on the subject.

The hon. and learned Member for Montgomery gave an eloquent apology for his absence from the Welsh Grand Committee next Monday. I shall be telling the Committee, perhaps in rather more detail, about the local reactions to the announcement.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will reconsider, and will listen closely to the strong views on the matter that will be expressed by representatives from Mongomeryshire, Radnorshire and Breconshire. I hope that his consultations with local opinion will lead him to the view that those are authorities that he should not end through the policies in the White Paper.

8.25 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I was intrigued to note that the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans) was coy about singling out Ystradgynlais in the litany of problems that will affect his constituency. The Secretary of State may come bearing gifts for him in a different context. I know Ystradgynlais well. It is at the top end of the Swansea valley in terms of both travel-to-work and major shopping centres. It looks down the valley and was put into Powys in local government terms in the early 1970s because of the need to find additional rateable value. In community terms, it probably relates rather more to the south than to the north.

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I do not want to detain the hon. Gentleman, but he may be aware that 5,000 of the people of Ystradgynlais have signed a petition asking to remain within Breconshire.

Mr. Anderson: They are wonderfully traditional people.

I am delighted that the Secretary of State is here because the points that I wish to make are addressed to him. However genial, listening and open he is, he is clearly fettered by a decade of Thatcherism and the remains of it —for example, in terms of the planning framework that he has inherited and with which he has to deal and of the infrastructure and the post-Thatcherite privatisation measures that are still in the pipeline and can still do such enormous damage to Wales.

I shall deal first with the lack of a planning framework and of a strategy for Wales. The very word "planning" was anathema in the last decade. The buzz words were "rolling back the frontiers of freedom" and the move was away from planning. Now, the balance has swung so far that Wales does not have a proper framework within which to set its plans. The Secretary of State will know that a number of exercises are under way. One is Wales 2010, which is no more than a "futureological" exercise—I understand that it will shortly be published. There is the economic forum in Cardiff university, which is focussing essentially on the labour market and modelling.

Lastly, there is a rather odd exercise which I and my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) attended a year or so ago. That amounted to a sub-contracting by the Welsh Office to the county councils, and only to the physical planning departments of those councils, to look at future problems in Wales. It was an edging, crab-wise—teetering, tottering—towards a partial planning framework such as that in "Wales: The Way Ahead", which we all remember with some affection.

Having destroyed the instruments of regional planning, the Government have left themselves without a framework within which Wales can be planned. That is wrong and the gap will have adverse effects in Wales. I believe that the Secretary of State, personally, would favour a more forward-looking planning system, but planning within his party, for ideological reasons, is still a word which dare not breathe its name. He has, therefore, to proceed cautiously and in a crabwise way.

There are two other elements that go to make up the Government's ideological clothes which substantially harm the prospects of tackling the problems of Wales. One of those elements is the road-rail infrastructure. Even the most right-wing of Governments who dislike intervention in the market accept that it is a proper role of government to provide a road-rail infrastructure.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) said, on Friday the Minister of State opened the Earlswood to Lon Las section of the M4—the "missing link". Some people may wonder what I am grumbling about. They may take the view that the Welsh Office has come bearing gifts. Let us consider the history of the venture. In the early 1970s, the M4 from Hammersmith to Pont Abraham was completed with the exception of the missing link. In the very early 1970s, the consulting engineers, Sir Owen Williams and Partners, were asked to undertake a feasibility study. By 1977 or 1978, the preferred route was published. From 1977-78 until now, there has been silence apart from that. It will not be until early 1995 or thereabouts that the small missing link will be completed. The long delay from the time when the preferred route was published—in October 1977—until now has been caused by the Government's unwillingness to give priority to the road, which is of major importance to the area.

I refer the Secretary of State to the report which was discussed at the regional conference of south Wales counties, which highlighted the fact that west Glamorgan has been the least successful area in attracting overseas investment. It cannot be coincidental that the missing link or bottleneck has had such a damaging effect on the perception, for locational purposes, of incoming industrialists. That has been the result of the lack of action of the Conservative-controlled Welsh Office over the past decade. Delay and obstruction have frustrated private motorists and have deterred the inward investor.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We have always recognised the need for the Baglan-Lon Las link. There were other areas in south Wales, however, which suffered from far worse congestion and had to be dealt with before the Baglan-Lon Las link.

Mr. Anderson: The Minister of State is a little coy about how he looked after his own patch. The victim was the economy of south-west Wales. There was a missing link to Swansea, and, indeed, to the whole of south-west Wales.

The high-speed train, about which we have heard so much, was the technology of the early 1970s. It is now clapped out. We are being denied electrification and that will have an adverse effect on Wales when the channel tunnel opens. I am thinking especially of our ability to link into the channel tunnel system. We have seen the deterioration since the early 1970s of the rail service to south Wales in terms of sleeper trains, early morning and late evening services and so on. As I have said, Wales has been short-changed over the channel tunnel. There are no plans for any through day trains to the continent from Wales and it is not clear how many, if any, of the 125 HSTs

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—the Paddington services—will divert to Waterloo to provide a cross-platform interchange with the Euro-style services.

The connection between the Western regional line and Waterloo via the west London line has been made more complicated due to the removal of the link or cord where the west London line crosses the Western region.

Passengers are losing out because of our lack of access to the continent and freight problems are manifold. There is likely to be a collapse in the volume of freight carried as a result of the Government's industrial and energy problems. It will be extremely difficult for freight services to have any prospect of success when it comes to trying to take advantage of the channel tunnel. The Secretary of State must be aware of the major question marks over peripheral rail services in Wales as a result of the privatisation proposals. Under the first tranche of privatisation, the Paddington-Swansea line will be privatised. From Swansea westward the contract may be won by Badger line or whoever. I understand that Badger line will make it a condition that it is able to interchange or integrate with its own bus services. A question must be posed for the HST services from west Wales that link into the Paddington rail service. There are many threats that arise directly to our south Wales services from the Government's privatisation ideology.

Perhaps the greatest threat of all to Swansea derives directly from the Government's policies. I have in mind the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and other governmental operations in south Wales. The Secretary of State will know that more than 4,000 jobs in south Wales which come within the Department of Transport are threatened because of the move beyond agency status. In the Swansea area, 3,000-plus jobs are threatened at the DVLA. There is also the driver and vehicle information technology sector of the Department which is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams). The Secretary of State must be aware that there is no loyalty in the Department of Transport to the DVLA. It is clear that it regards it as an outstation. The Department is under pressure to say that it has got rid of civil servants and that it puts people into the private sector. The result is the destruction of the policy of dispersal of Government jobs, which has been the only direct weapon available to the Government to enable them to take jobs to areas outside London. As the Government divest themselves of that weapon, there will be devastating job implications.

Has the Secretary of State been involved in any of the Government's decisions? We have the sad memory of his sidelining of pit closures and of the Inland Revenue deciding to close two repayment offices in Wales, one in Wrexham and one in the Swansea valley. Wales alone was left without the benefit of an IRRO and had to turn to Belfast, with all the language and other problems that arose from that.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does my hon. Friend agree that the threat is even more profound? Privatisation, which is one of the Government's dogmas, is in conflict with one of the policies about which they are least enthusiastic in implementing—regional policy. At the same time, they are revising regional policy, possibly in favour of English regions and to the disadvantage of Wales. Over the next few years, the combination of privatisation and the loss of regional support could mean that the position in Wales worsens.

Mr. Anderson: Yes, and that is a direct result of the Government's policies. I understand that the Secretary of State is on the Cabinet Committee that is considering ways of attracting jobs to Wales and other areas. What is being done about safeguarding those jobs that are already in Wales and under the direct control of the Government?

We are aware of the notorious memorandum issued last October. The position is not that suggested by the Secretary of State during Question Time—some sort of academic exercise that must be carried out because the contract ends in April. The Government imposed the exercise on the chief executive. He said that, in his judgment, it was worth further examining the contractor option. He admitted that if they went ahead with that option, almost all the 3,000-plus jobs in Swansea would go —yet that was the option that he appeared to be recommending to the Government.

As the Government set off further along their ideological path, there will be even greater threats to jobs in Wales. Even on the WDA figures, it costs about £14,000 to attract each new job to Wales. On the Government's figures, every unemployed person costs the Exchequer about £9,000. At a time when the ideologues are pressing forward, who will say, "Stop, hold on, is it in the public interest for the Government to go ahead with such ideological frolics and make people in Wales unemployed? Is it in the public interest for the Government to threaten 3,000 people in the DVLA with unemployment?"

Is the Secretary of State to be sidelined again, or will he fight in Cabinet to prevent the danger to Wales? The local economy of Swansea will be undermined if the DVLA is closed. We know that the exercise has been taking place for several months and, according to the chief executive's memorandum, was likely to start in October and to last for three months—so it may have ended already. It would not even have come to the Secretary of State's attention had it not been for a leak. I appeal to him to intervene to prevent such nonsense and to save those valuable jobs in Swansea.

8.42 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I hope that hon. Members will forgive me if, in speaking about Wales—as is proper on St. David's day in a Welsh debate—I begin with my constituency and, in particular, the town of Aberystwyth. Historically, Aberystwyth is second to none in national importance in Wales. It is the site of the first college of the University of Wales, built—according to popular mythology, which in itself is important—with the pence of the poor. That is an expression of Welsh nationality. It is part of the aspiration of the people of Wales to join the modern world and to aspire to higher education—the children of the gwerin, the ordinary people.

The first principal of the college was Thomas Charles Edwards, son of the great Lewis Edwards, who was principal of the theological college at Bala and grandson of the great Thomas Charles of Bala—one of the greatest of all Welsh men—who was one of the Charles family of Carmarthenshire, noted for their contribution to poetry and scholarship.

Aberystwyth university college is an education establishment of world renown. It has now been joined by

other, similar establishments such as the national library, the Welsh agricultural college and the pioneering and wonderful Welsh plant breeding station, now the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research, one of the prime world establishments of its kind. The college of librarianship is now a part of the university college. I could go on and on with the list.

On the western seaboard of Wales we have a centre of higher education and research that is of great significance. I am sure that Ministers would agree that it is vital that its prosperity is preserved—indeed, enhanced. Aberystwyth should become the cultural capital of Wales and certainly the capital of mid Wales. If we ever have a permanent site for the national eisteddfod, it should be Aberystwyth. It would be an appropriate headquarters for the Welsh Language Board. It is already the headquarters of many other institutions.

The future of Aberystwyth is vital not only for its own sake, but for the sake of a proper balance in the social, cultural and economic structure of Wales, which needs a centre of gravity on the western seaboard to counteract that of Cardiff in the south-east and Deeside in the north-east.

The Development Board for Rural Wales, in its strategy, now emphasises developments further west. Having achieved some success in the eastern area of mid Wales—in New Town and adjoining areas—it is now prioritising Ceredigion; and, within Ceredigion, Aberystwyth is crucial to the board's strategy.

Some say that the remoteness of Aberystwyth is a problem. Remoteness is a subjective judgment, depending on where one is. Aberystwyth is not particularly remote from Talgarreg, where I live. I can get there in 40 minutes, so it is not half as remote from Talgarreg as London is. The remoteness of London and other centres of power from Aberystwyth is a problem. That is why communications are crucial for the staff at the education and research centres. Already in Aberystwyth, and indeed in other parts of Wales, there is a sense of being inadequately represented on the councils and committees that determine research grants. That is a disadvantage. At a meeting of a research council committee, one man is reported as saying, "We tend to forget you at Aberystwyth, out beyond the hills." That committee is repsonsible for awarding research grants. Obtaining money from research councils is crucial at a time of change in the arrangements for research funding generally.

Communications are also important in attracting students to Aberystwyth's colleges, and they are obviously important for business people and for holidaymakers. Therefore, for the retention and enhancement of the importance of Aberystwyth in the west, an efficient railway service is absolutely essential; yet that very service is now under serious threat. Over the years there have been significant improvements to the main line from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth, although it is true that we have lost the InterCity direct connection to London. That has been compensated for partly by the introduction of the 158 sprinters, which are pleasant, comfortable and fairly rapid.

There has been substantial investment in the infrastructure, amounting to millions of pounds, from local authorities and the DBRW. There were plans for improvements in timetabling, journey times and connections, but of late the reality has been quite different. Not long ago the news broke that Shell was transferring its weekly oil train from Stanlow to Aberystwyth from rail to road as from 1 May. I think that that is due to increased charges by Railfreight, the effects of which are seen elsewhere. They are generally recognised as part of the process of preparing for privatisation. That change is bound to be madness. How a train comprising 15 wagons can be uneconomic beats me. Imagine the effect of moving 19,000 tonnes of petrol products weekly from rail to road in terms of danger, congestion, wear and tear to the roads, and environmental damage. The roads in question are particularly busy during the summer.

Recently, two letters mysteriously found their way on to my desk. They are from a person named J. D. H. Russell, a Regional Railways civil engineer in Birmingham, to a Dr. N. N. Higton, infrastructure manager at Shrewsbury. The first, dated 19 January, states:

"It is becoming increasingly clear that resources and funding to maintain the true rural railway will be very scarce in 1993/94. The Cambrian main line is a 'green' route, and the coast 'yellow'.

With this background, and knowing that Freight will be ceasing to serve the oil terminal at Aberystwyth shortly, the consideration of additional loco hauled traffic is unwise.

The future for this railway, west of Shrewsbury, is becoming clarified as 'sprinter only'."

The second letter, to Mr. Mark Causebrook, states:

"Thank you for your letter of 1st February 1993. I confirm that my letter of 19th January referred to both the Cambrian Main Line as well as the Coast.

I am aware that next summer's timetable includes a few locomotive hauled trains to Pwllheli. I am not happy about this, but it would appear that there is no alternative for this year.

In the light of the proposed 'Maintenance Holiday' I am unwilling, at this time, to agree to any additional locomotive hauled trains west of Shrewsbury. I am aware that occasionally I may need to run a locomotive hauled ballast train for my own purposes, but in such a case I take the responsibility for safety and I can specify any particular conditions of passage."

Mr. Llwyd: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the green route means essential maintenance only and that the yellow route means no maintenance whatsoever? Is it correct to say that the Cambrian coast line will receive no maintenance in the foreseeable future, despite its importance to the whole of north-west Wales?

Mr. Dafis: I much regret that my hon. Friend is right. A green route is one that receives minimal maintenance, and the yellow is one that receives no maintenance.

What will be the practical consequences? The removal of the freight function will be damaging in itself—it is one less service for which the line will be used. It means also that maintenance can be reduced. Freight and locomotives have the heaviest axle loading. Bridges will be allowed to fall to lower safety levels. Bringing freight back to the line in future—which is what ought to happen, and the Secretary of State says that he wants that to happen—would be very difficult.

The "maintenance holiday"—a fine euphemism for neglect—will inevitably mean speed restrictions on certain sections of the line. There will be more and more in time, especially on bends. Broken fences will not be repaired, with the result that animals will stray on to the track and create delays and perhaps derailments. The service will be less attractive, there will be poorer adherence to timetables, journey times will be longer, and there is the

[Mr. Dafis]

implication of reduced use as travellers choose other options, such as using their cars. There will also be reduced revenue.

It amounts to nothing short of rundown. At some points, the arguments for closure would become compelling. I am told that those developments all spring from a reduction in the public service obligation grant and the rumoured favouring of the eastern peripheral area of central regions, for reasons that I will not explain now.

What else might one expect from a reduction in the PSO grant that has been made, especially from the smaller amount available to the Welsh periphery? One would expect a reduction in the number of services, and that is happening. One might expect also the use of cheaper rolling stock. I am unofficially advised that in April the line will lose the 158 sprinters that were introduced to compensate for the loss of the InterCity stock, to be replaced by 156s and 153s—which are inferior, less comfortable, and slower.

On the Pwllheli line, the occasional locomotives will be replaced by commuter 150 sprinters—which are cramped and far less attractive. Imagine the effect on the thousands of travellers from the English midlands who use that service to travel to Butlins in Pwllheli in the summer and on Pwllheli's general holiday business and that of the Lleyn peninsula.

I ask the Secretary of State for Wales to tell the Secretary of State for Transport that the rundown of the Welsh rail service is intolerable. Privatisation or no privatisation, we want the whole existing network to be retained. We want possible new routes explored, rather than see a reduction in existing routes. We want enhanced, improved services, proper maintenance, and more freight.

The electrification of the line through Cardiff, Swansea and Carmarthen all the way to Fishguard and Milford, with a link to Pembroke Dock, should also be given serious consideration. In the north, the same facility should be provided through to Holyhead. There should be the development of central and southern corridors to the Republic of Ireland—a Euroroute, no less.

The best way to ensure that is to stop Wales being a periphery at someone else's core. We need an integrated transport policy for Wales of the kind that the Welsh Select Committee and Welsh transport experts have long advocated. If privatisation must come, it should incorporate a franchising authority for Wales, and the Welsh Office should be made responsible for the public service obligation grant, to ensure that we receive our fair share.

In the context of the broader environmental framework, it is important to realise that the realities of the environmental crisis facing our planet mean that we have reached a turning point in world history. The requirement to move towards environmental sustainability has massive implications. The Community's fifth environmental programme on sustainability and the United Nations conference on environment and development document "Agenda 21" are both compromise documents and less radical than they ought to be, but they show that environmental sustainability means deep-seated radical changes. Crucial to sustainability are far-reaching adjustments in transportation, including a substantial shift from road to rail.

If we allow the railways that link west Wales to the rest of Britain, and to the European continent, to decline and to be closed, we may as well say that we will close down Aberystwyth, and, indeed, a great part of Wales. To fail to develop the railways of central and southern corridors will be to miss an enormous opportunity. If we shut down the railways, we may as well shut down Wales—and, at this juncture, Wales is not particularly in a mood to be shut down.

8.58 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): When researching for the debate, I looked up some details about St. David. I discovered, among other things, that he practised a lifestyle involving immersion in cold water—something that I would recommend to his namesake, the Secretary of State. Certainly many of my constituents would love to tip some cold water over the right hon. Gentleman, following the speech that he made today: it offered them little hope. That applies especially to the 2,895 people who are officially unemployed in the Neath area—a figure to which can be safely added the 5,000 who are economically inactive. The Government would prefer us not to notice that figure, but it describes those who fall off the unemployment register for one reason or another, although they are of working age.

When those two figures are added together, we find that some 8,000 people are out of work in the Neath constituency—about 30 per cent. of the working population. The youth unemployment figures are frightening: figures released only last week show that Neath is the worst-hit area in Britain. A staggering 36 per cent. of people under 25 are unemployed in the Neath area: more than one in three. If we add those who are temporarily off the dole—people in dead-end training schemes that lead them nowhere—we find that about 50 per cent. of our youngsters are without jobs in the Neath area. That is a disgrace, not only for the people of Neath but for the people of Wales as a whole.

There is a clear correlation between the youth unemployment figures and the youth crime figures. For example, 2,345 serious offences by juveniles were recorded in 1991; that figure is clearly linked to the rise in youth unemployment. I believe that it is hypocritical for the Government to proclaim themselves the party of law and order when it is their policies that have produced the increase in crime from which we have all suffered.

The figures for Wales, for example, show a 138 per cent. increase in crime since 1979 and only a 3 per cent. increase in police staffing provision. In other words, the increase in crime is 46 times more than the increase in police provision by the Secretary of State. No wonder there has been a massive slump in the clear-up rates in south Wales, from 41 per cent. to 29 per cent. In Neath, crime has risen by 96 per cent. since 1979; yet police staffing in Neath has fallen from 104 to 90—admittedly, partly because of the relocation of some senior officers.

Many of my constituents want to see more police on the beat, assisting their local communities to deal with a crime wave for which the Secretary of State and the whole Conservative Government in Wales are directly responsible. They have virtually encouraged the development of the conditions for crime; in a sense, they have incited crime.

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hain: The hon. Gentleman spoke for so long that I am surprised at his arrogance in seeking to intervene.

Not content with encouraging the crime wave, the Secretary of State has also encouraged attacks on education provision. In west Glamorgan, the county's fine tradition is currently at risk. Nursery funding, for example, is seriously endangered: the county has one of the best records in the country in that regard—if not the best record—with over 90 per cent. take-up rates for three-year-olds; yet there is no specific revenue grant for nursery education and the new funding arrangements under the Education Bill will give it no protection. I seriously fear for its future.

I also fear for the county's outstanding record in education and for the work of its officers, local people and councillors. It has had to cut its budget by £6·4 million, £2·2 million of which has come off the education budget as a result of the Secretary of State's instructions. As a result, its record in special needs, music, arts and sport is threatened. I am worried about that and I hope that the Minister will reassure me when he replies. I am especially anxious about village primary schools which, only a few years ago, were threatened as a result of a Welsh Office edict. I think that primary schools in my constituency—such as Rhifawr, Clun, Tonmawr and Pontrhydyfen—deserve a thriving future. They are at the heart of local villages, yet they are all threatened by the cuts forced on schools by the Welsh Office.

It is vital for the Secretary of State to stop cutting the provision for local counties such as West Glamorgan and any of its successors. It is disgraceful that he should have bullied West Glamorgan into cutting its budget so savagely by threatening it with capping proposals.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The hon. Gentleman is aware that we do not—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order I think that there has been some misunderstanding. The hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) had concluded his speech and was not giving way.

9.4 pm

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) for being brief. I shall try to be the same to accommodate my colleagues.

Fortunately, Carmarthen has one of the lowest unemployment rates in Wales—5·3 per cent. We have a problem with low pay, with which the Government's plans to abolish wages councils will not help. Unemployment is high in rural areas around Carmarthen. Last week, the front page of the local newspaper, the *Camarthen Journal*, said: "Superstore jobs bonanza". Fortunately, because of our geographical position, the service sector is doing well, but there were 2,700 applicants for 230 jobs—12 for each job—80 per cent. of which were part time. That shows how desperate people are for work. I am sure that in other parts of Wales there are 20, 30 or 40 applicants for each vacancy.

There are 3,248 unemployed people in the constituency of Carmarthen. That is below the constituency average for Wales, but a third of them are young people aged between 18 and 25. Each constituency has more than 1,000 people aged between 18 to 25 out of work. How do they plan their lives? Our generation was lucky to have higher education and all of life's chances lay ahead of the Secretary of State.

I represent an area where 65 per cent. of the population are Welsh speaking. The Education Bill will not help and the Welsh Language Bill may help only modestly, but the biggest threat to the Welsh language is unemployment. Young people are having to leave rural areas and are going to Swansea, Cardiff and across the border, taking their families with them. The problem for the language is outward migration: young people planning their futures outside Dyfed and Gwynedd.

I do not know whether the Secretary of State is involved in preparations for the Budget, but I hope that the top priority will be jobs, which is the biggest problem facing the economy. The Government must first stop destroying existing jobs in the coal industry and local authorities and by privatisation, market testing and many of their other philosophies. Local authority capital receipts from the sale of council houses should be released to allow local authorities to build houses and to help tackle the desperate social need for housing. Opposition Members would like major capital investment to be funded by a windfall profit tax on privatised industries.

Some 300 jobs could be lost at Pendine. I have written to the Secretary of State asking for a meeting with him as soon as possible with my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger). Is there any way in which he can bring his influence to bear on the Ministry of Defence? In Dyfed we have lost nearly 1,000 jobs because of defence cuts in the past few years and we will lose more in the next two to three years. We have already had our share of cuts, so I hope that we can arrange an early meeting and that the Secretary of State will make representations about Pendine to the Ministry of Defence on behalf of myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke.

9.9 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): The past 14 years have been disastrous for the majority of people in Wales. It has been a disastrous period for the environment, jobs, housing and indeed the poor. Hon. Members highlighted many of the disasters in the past 12 months.

On the environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes) brought to the House's attention the fact that Browning Ferris had made a successful application to the Secretary of State. The firm's record speaks for itself. In 1987 it was found guilty of felony charges, of price fixing in Ohio, and was fined $1 million. In 1984 it was fined $350,000 for price fixing in Georgia. In 1987 it was fined $6 million for price fixing and attempted monopoly of Vermont hauling market. In 1984, an informant testified to BF's association with organised crime before a state investigatory committee. In 1987 the Department of Justice announced action on an Environmental Protection Agency complaint, filing charges of 2,800 violations at the Livingston toxic dump. In 1988 the company settled the law suit for $1·1 million, an additional $900,000 to the state and $500,000 to Louisiana university. Its record goes on and on.

Most sensible people would have thought that, with such a record, there was no possibility of the firm's planning application being accepted in a town such as Newport, but that was not the case. The Secretary of State for Wales has agreed to a planning application from that company, which has links with organised crime in the United States, and it is not a one-off example.

[Mr. Llew Smith]

We can cite the case of ReChem in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). My hon. Friend and I have been pressing for a public inquiry for many years. The Secretary of State told us that if we could bring evidence of contamination to the House, he would re-think his position on a public inquiry. Some months ago I provided evidence that, even using its own measuring rod, ReChem had broken environmental guidelines more than 2,000 times. The Secretary of State's response was total silence.

ReChem has now made an application to build a new incinerator and its application is being considered by the pollution inspectorate. However, the investigation is a farce. Some months ago, I and many Members of the European Parliament had a meeting with the Secretary of State. I asked him a question three times and he gave the same answer: ReChem was building an incinerator. We now know that the decision on that application was taken before the pollution inspectorate had reported. That is scandalous and an insult to the people in the communities involved.

The waste is not only local but comes from many other countries. For example, in December last year it came from Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Italy, and Luxembourg. We have said that each country should be responsible for its own waste. That is not a nationalistic demand but a demand for responsible government. Governments should not allow goods to be produced unless they are capable and willing to deal with them once they have come to the end of their natural life.

There have been other disasters, for example, in housing. In Blaenau Gwent, 4,000 people are on the council house waiting list. There is no possibility of their receiving accommodation in the months or years ahead. In addition, hundreds of people are waiting for renovation grants but those grants have been stopped.

The past 14 years have also been a disaster for unemployed people. Young people with tremendous skills, talents and creativity are not being given the opportunity to use them to benefit their communities and to benefit the great industries in which they should be working. As a result of an act of economic madness, the Government are now paying £9,000 per person to keep people on the dole. That money should be used to breathe life into our communities in south-east Wales.

The past decade has been disastrous. It is to the credit of the people of south-east Wales that they have not given in. Increasingly, they are raising their voices in protest. As they do that more in the years ahead, we shall see an end to this Government and to the disasters that they have inflicted on our communities.

9.15 pm

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith), for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) and for Neath (Mr. Hain) for keeping their speeches short so that I can make a brief contribution. As I mentioned when I intervened in the speech of the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), west Wales faces the problem of a total restructuring of its economy following the closure of RAF Brawdy, the proposed closure of RNAD Trecwn in 1996 and the closure of the Milford mines depot in April 1992.

In the energy industry, which has been a mainstay of the local economy, especially in the form of the former Central Electricity Generating Board power station which is now controlled by National Power, there are plans to halve the work force shortly from approximately 300 to 150. Dowty Seals, with the support of regional aid, came to Milford Haven some years ago. It is now cutting back and has announced 50 redundancies.

We need a total restructuring of the economy in west Wales. Agriculture has faced cut after cut after cut and will never return to the level of employment that it used to provide. The manufacturing sector in Pembrokeshire has shrunk, as shown by the example of Dowty Seals.

The cuts have shocked many people in all walks of life in Pembrokeshire. On Friday night, I went to the second meeting of the Pembroke chamber of commerce which was formed only at the beginning of the year. I was accompanied by the two chief executives of the district council. The chamber of commerce wanted to hear the proposals, the plans and the strategy for rejuvenating and restructuring the local economy put forward by the task force which was set up 13 months ago by the Secretary of State. We reported fairly that, although the task force had striven for 13 months to produce a report, the Secretary of State unfortunately had not matched the strategy with the cash required to implement it. Some £2·5 million of rural initiative money has been directed for this financial year and for the next three financial years towards restructuring the economy which, from the closure of the Ministry of Defence depots alone, will remove from Pembrokeshire £25 million per annum, irrespective of other structural changes.

People were shocked when they were told that the task force which was given responsibility by the Secretary of State to try to reinvigorate the local economy had not met since 19 November. They were shocked to know that the director, who was in post until January, had not been replaced. If that is a measure of the commitment to west Wales, to Pembrokeshire and to the restructuring of our local economy, we shall not see the radical improvement required. To take 12 months to produce a final report is unacceptable. To then say to the people of Pembrokeshire and of Cardigan that all that they will get is £2·5 million to restructure their economy is not on.

We had hoped that the need to improve the rail and road communications to which many hon. Members have referred could have been a pleasant announcement and schemes to invigorate and restructure our economy could have been brought forward. When we are asked about placing new Government jobs in Pembrokeshire, the reply is that our communications are bad.

We expected that some of the bypasses which have been planned for three, four or five years time could have been brought forward, but all that we were told was that we are getting the improvements to the M4 around Baglan. That does not solve the problems in Pembrokeshire. It does not solve the problem of communications to our ferry ports, such as Fishguard, and on to Ireland.

The message that I bring from the Pembrokeshire chamber of commerce is that the Secretary of State's response to restructuring the economy in west Wales is wholly inadequate. If the Secretary of State gave a commitment, it would certainly be worth a lot more than £2·5 million per annum.

9.20 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): It has been the usual St. David's day debate so far—not always in the charitable Christian spirit of St. David. Obviously, we would like to be able to agree on everything on St. David's day, but there is a wide gulf not simply across the Dispatch Box. To be honest, the gulf sometimes seems about 1,000 miles wide.

The Secretary of State told us in the House, as he did in the Welsh Grand Committee, that it was our obligation as an Opposition to talk Wales up. We regard it as our job to tell the truth as we find it. We object strongly and it tends to catch the Secretary of State on the quick when we say that the most rapidly rising medical science in Wales is that of statistical physiotherapy—it is sometimes known as massaging the figures. The Secretary of State wears pink contact lenses and then tells us that everything in the garden is rosy.

I shall give some examples of things that tend to puzzle us. The Secretary of State referred to the training and enterprise councils. He has been in charge of them for almost 12 months and has assembled the training and employment division so that he can co-ordinate employment and training activities in Wales.

The Secretary of State said that the budget for the training and enterprise councils for next year will be £102 or £103 million, which is roughly the same as the outturn figure for training and enterprise council expenditure this year. Of course, it is not the same as the budget expenditure for training and enterprise councils this year which was about £115 or £116 million. Something strange seems to have been going on which perhaps the Secretary of State may care to think about.

An unintended profit seems to have been made on the activities of the training and enterprise councils in Wales under the first year of the Secretary of State's administration. I asked a question about the matter recently. Training and enterprise councils are not allowed to make a profit: they make a surplus. Of course, it is the same thing. It simply means that they have not spent the money that they should have done. The Secretary of State was looking after them and should have insisted that they spend the money.

The worrying thing is that the councils are people-oriented activities. They are supposed to spend their money on training, but they appear to be going into property speculation. They will use the £15 million surplus on at least two occasions as far as we are aware. Perhaps the Secretary of State can either confirm or deny that or tell us the policy of the Welsh Office on the councils going into property speculation.

We understand that the councils will build head-quarters for themselves in north-east Wales and in west Glamorgan. Not only that, but they will build space in the Northop business park on the A55 and the new business park on the old A48 near the Velindre tinplate works, which they will sublet. I am not sure whether that is what the Welsh Office intended the companies to do and that is probably why the Secretary of State has cut their budget for next year.

If the right hon. Gentleman disapproves of the councils going into property speculation, why did not he administer them properly in the first year? Is that good news or bad news? We think that it is wrong. It is a great criticism of the Welsh Office's administration of the training and enterprise councils that the Secretary of State has not stopped them becoming property speculators when they should be spending 100 per cent. of their money on such an important activity as training.

Another matter on which we tend to see things from the opposite end of the telescope to the Secretary of State is the Welsh Development Agency budget for next year. The Secretary of State proudly boasts about the new £50 million property programme. He says that he announced in the autumn public expenditure statement that the WDA's budget would increase to a new record of £171 million in the year which will start in a month's time. Everything is a record in the eyes of the Secretary of State.

Yet when one examines the WDA budget, the Secretary of State is providing not more but less money for the WDA next year. He is reducing the grant in aid to the WDA. So what is the WDA supposed to do next year? It is supposed to get 63·4 per cent. of its expenditure back from the users of the WDA's services. So that will mean sharply increased rents for tenants and vast numbers of existing industrial estates being sold over the heads of their tenants, or more bespoke work rather than advance factory building work.

We are not sure what the change will mean, but certainly more Welsh Office money is not going to the WDA. But the Secretary of State presents it as more Welsh Office money. He has a tendency to reinforce his rose-coloured spectacles with pink contact lenses. We are not happy about that way of looking at things. If the WDA grant is to be reduced, it is better to say so. The Secretary of State should say, "I cannot afford to keep up the public expenditure because those swines in the Treasury have cut my money." It is much better to say that so that the people of Wales know exactly what the truth is.

There is a crisis about objective 1 status. If the four counties for which the Secretary of State applied for it through the President of the Board of Trade had achieved it, we would have had 75 per cent. grants and could have obtained grants for a much wider range of activities such as health, hospitals and training centres. Virtually anything can be covered in an area which has objective 1 status. It is an enormous boon.

Unfortunately, Merseyside has been given objective 1 status and the four counties of rural Wales have not. Perhaps the Secretary of State can tell us whether his area of the Wirral is included in Merseyside. I am not sure what is the definition of Merseyside, or whether it extends to the terribly deprived areas of the Wirral. We always think that the Secretary of State tends to see Wales as nothing more than a pretty view from the Wirral.

Sometimes we feel that the Secretary of State should pay attention to our problems rather than see Wales as a jumping-off point from which he might achieve promotion to a Cabinet job that he would really like to do. That is why he tends to go in for self-promotion. He hopes that self-promotion of the Secretary of State will lead to promotion for the Secretary of State at the next Cabinet reshuffle. Then he could forget about whether he should have tried harder for Wales rather than thinking about the interests of the Wirral and Merseyside.

The message about whether things are going well or badly must be handled carefully and with sensitivity. We do not believe in depressing the people of Wales about the difficult conditions which everyone goes through in a recession. It is difficult. One has to mix up the messages about what are the problems and what is the potential. One must give equal emphasis to both. Opposition

[Mr. Rhodri Morgan]

Members believe that that is important. We are as keen as the Secretary of State—if not more so, because we represent constituencies in Wales—to see economic regeneration of Wales take place at maximum speed.

However, we do not accept that it is our job to cover over the problems in the way that the Secretary of State wants when he asks us to talk up the market. We see problems in the health service. The Secretary of State produced figures for waiting times. The Government have stopped talking about waiting lists now. They can say that waiting times are down. They cannot say that waiting lists are down because they are up.

I take an example from my constituency. One would love to cheer on the sidelines when the Secretary of State or one of his Ministers announces an initiative. A month ago the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, who has responsibility for health, announced an extra £0·75 million fund called the waiting times initiative fund. He was going to release last-minute money, before the end of the financial year, for operations to be carried out on people who were in serious danger of having to wait beyond the maximum time when treatment should be given, as set out in the patients charter.

I did a lot of checking and the money was genuine. The Government were releasing an extra £750,000 and much was to be spent in hospitals in my constituency, such as the Prince of Wales, on artificial knee joint and hip joint operations. I felt that I could get into trouble because I could not find anything to criticise. I thought that I might have to give one and a half cheers. I did not know what to do. I thought it was best if I kept quiet, because I believed that things looked really good at first sight. I kept quiet to see whether those extra 200 operations would be carried out in that hospital in Cardiff for patients in south Glamorgan. Apparently, 100 knee and 100 hip operations were to be performed. That had to be a good thing, but I wanted to know whether it would happen.

I am glad that I waited, because today I received my first complaint about a cancelled cartilage operation that was due next Friday. I thought that perhaps those operations were being cancelled, but that the artificial hip and knee operations would still go ahead. I rang the hospital administrator of the Cardiff Royal group to see what had happened to those 200 extra operations. He said, "There is no problem with the contracts. We just have a problem with the medical staff. We have not got the medical staff that we thought we had."

It looks as though the promise to spend an extra £200,000 on hip and knee operations in south Glamorgan —I believe that an extra £750,000 was allocated in total, but I do not know about expenditure outside my area— has become yet another Tory broken promise. I was right not to cheer. Those operations will not be done before the end of the financial year.

Leaving that problem aside, our health authority is now run on a blitz at the beginning of the year and then it enters freeze mode: it worries that it has overspent because it is working too hard. Finally, at the end of the financial year, the authority goes into blitz mode once again when the Welsh Office gives some extra money to protect the waiting time initiative if the authority is in danger of exceeding the waiting limit set in the patients charter.

We know from the experience of my constituent today, which was confirmed by the hospital administrator to whom I spoke, that the blitz-freeze-blitz mode is no way to run a hospital service. The only way to run it is to give an authority the budget to run an effective service which works throughout the year. An authority should not have four months off in the summer when the consultants play cards because the budget has run out until the Welsh Office releases the last-minute blitz money.

I hope that the Minister will confirm the exact position with regard to the waiting time initiative. Will hospitals be allowed to carry money over into the first few months of the next financial year if they cannot spend it this side of the old financial year?

Mr. Richards *rose*——

Mr. Morgan: I am sorry, but I cannot give way. I know that the hon. Gentleman made an absolutely wonderful speech, which bowled everyone over. I understand that he did not insult me and I hear that it was better in the original German.

The Secretary of State mentioned Tillery Valley Foods as one of the big firms that he hopes will bring great prosperity to the north Gwent valleys. The House might be interested to know that that company held its opening ceremony today and a jolly good thing, too. Another person who was mentioned in connection with that company was Mr. Ian Grist, who was defeated at the last election by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, Central (Mr. Jones). [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] I thought that that would raise a cheer.

Mr. Grist was on the guest list for the opening ceremony of Tillery Valley Foods, as were most senior personnel of most of the health authorities in south Wales and of the NHS executive, including John Wyn Owen, the boss man of the NHS in Wales and probably the No. 2 civil servant at the Welsh Office. Why were they all at that opening ceremony?

Mr. Alex Carlile: To have lunch.

Mr. Morgan: Well, it was not just to have lunch. That company is a food producer, but it produces a particular kind of food which is of interest to me when I am trying to decide whether everything in the garden is rosy. We want to be able to count the extra jobs at Tillery Valley Foods against the unemployment in Abertillery district. However, the reason why the company invited Ian Grist, John Wyn Owen and the other directors of supplies and purchasing of the health authorities was that it makes cook-chill foods. Therefore, the firm will replace the in-house catering at schools and hospitals in the region. Any additional jobs created at Tillery Valley Foods will probably be jobs lost in hospitals, health authorities, meals-on-wheels services and schools. No net additional jobs will result from Tillery Valley Foods. If that firm is successful, it will only be because jobs have been lost in public sector catering.

If the public sector wins through its in-house bids and keeps the work in the hospitals, Tillery Valley Foods will not sell many cook-chill foods. It wants John Wyn Owen from the national health service directorate in Wales, Ian Grist and others at the launch to ensure that the company is given a fair crack of the whip when the contracts are dished out. That is the worry that we have and that is why we are suspending judgment on the wonderful inward

investment and new-start businesses that the Minister has been emphasising today—as he does every time he makes a speech.

One of our great worries is that, as Wales is apparently ineligible for objective 1 status, some areas will be granted less money from the EEC under objective 2 status even if objective 2 status is maintained in some regions. There is a fairly restrictive list of projects for which grants are awarded and there may be less money for the United Kingdom if Merseyside, the highlands and islands and Northern Ireland are granted objective 1 status, which was previously given only to Northern Ireland.

Have the grants been fairly awarded? Has the EEC decided fairly that Northern Ireland, the highlands and islands and Merseyside are in one category and south Wales, the industrial north-east of Wales and the three counties of rural Wales—north, mid and west Wales—are much worse off than the rest of Wales? The proof of the pudding is in the eating.

Despite the Secretary of State's picture of Wales as the land of milk and honey, in the final statistical analysis of relative levels of prosperity, it is the average family income that counts. If we compare region by region, the south-east would generally be at the top of the league table, the midlands would be in the middle, Scotland would come next and finally, next to the bottom, would be Wales. Northern Ireland would be at the bottom, with Wales just above it. The Secretary of State is not making the case for Wales and obtaining the EEC grants—based on average family income—that he should.

The Secretary of State also tried to say that, in terms of support for businesses, he had solved the problem of one-stop shops. The Secretary of State—who should pay attention for a minute—claimed that, under his leadership, the one-stop shops problem of duplication of effort in giving support to businesses had been solved. However, a recent parliamentary reply to me shows that he has set up a working party of 12 people which is not even to report until May. Only after that working party has reported in two months' time will the Secretary of State start to give serious attention to making a decision. However, he is quite willing to tell the House today that he has already made the decision. There is a serious problem.

A strong part of our philosophy involves setting up a network of one-stop shops. We have five one-stop shops for small business advice in Cardiff and many other regions in Wales have three or four. The Secretary of State must decide whether he wants the job to be led by training and enterprise councils, the regional offices of the Welsh Development Agency, local enterprise agencies, local authorities or someone else, and what the one-stop shops are supposed to do.

We want them to provide innovation advice, training and small premises. We would like them to be able to offer seed capital and venture capital to help small and medium-sized firms to survive and grow and to come into being more rapidly, to form the basis of the local Welsh economy, alongside those inward investments—when we get them.

That is how we feel about how the Secretary of State has handled our affairs and I do not think that the Minister of State will say anything very different. Although he does at least represent a Welsh constituency, he tends to wander about in a daze and not to see the problems that we face. Both of them are part of a Government happy to be led by a Prime Minister who believes that we should understand less about crime. He also believes in the obscenity of going to the Carlton club and demanding that the unemployed do work as a requirement for benefit—and this from a man who claims to believe in a classless society. In the case of the Carlton club, one might say that he has replaced noblesse oblige with jobless oblige.

We do not want to live in a world in which we wander the streets of Cardiff on a Saturday and see young teenagers behind cardboard signs saying, "Hungary and homeless: please help". That problem was mentioned by the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans), who talked of the need to take the rough sleepers initiative from London down to Cardiff. That is a condemnation of the society that the Conservative Government have brought about after 14 years in power.

9.41 pm

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): All times in the history of Wales appear to be times of momentous change, and our time is no exception. At this time a great deal of the steadfastness that characterised our patron saint is called for. I do not intend to speak as my right hon. Friend's hagiographer, but he has certainly shown a great deal of steadfastness in the face of questioning today on the effects of the recession and of local government reorganisation in Wales. Neither of those problems faced St. David. I suspect that they would have been as light relief to him—as they appeared to be to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan).

Education might certainly have concerned St. David as a way to eliminating ignorance and paganism and to teaching people the difference between right and wrong. It is a sobering reflection on the human condition that we still need lessons of this kind—now more than ever—as a number of hon. Members have pointed out.

I should like to think that the saint would approve of the state taking direct action as envisaged in the Education Bill—*[Interruption.]* I note that there has been no intervention from above, even though there has been from below. I would also like to imagine that our saint would approve of the provisions of the Welsh Language Bill. It is a civilised measure, weak according to some, strong according to others, and about right according to most.

We have heard a number of speeches about my right hon. Friend's local government reorganisation proposals —from my hon. Friends the Members for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), and for Brecon and Radnor (Mr. Evans). We heard a powerful plea for Montgomershire from the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile). I heard some but not all of his speech.I heard his final remarks expressing his warmly favourable feelings for a directly elected Welsh assembly. We are due to consider the governance of Wales at Cardiff next Monday. No doubt we shall hear a great deal more then about every aspect of that fascinating subject—except perhaps from the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery, who was eloquent today about his impending absence on Monday.

What surprised me about the speech of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr.Davies) was the total absence of an alternative strategy for the Welsh economy. We were promised one at the last sitting of the Welsh Grand Committee, and we were told that it would be fully costed and presented today, but we have had nothing positive from the hon.Gentleman. Why is that? Would it have cost

[Sir Wyn Roberts]

too much and involved increased taxation which would not have fitted in well with the current thinking of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith)? On 15 January this year in Paris the right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

"It is, I believe, economic madness to contemplate net increases in taxation on ordinary taxpayers at the moment."

I am glad that the hon. Member for Caerphilly approves of his leader's remarks.

I know that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is remodelling his party's policy on law and order. Therefore, I was not surprised to see the hon. Member for Caerphilly lending a hand. Crime has been on the increase since the second world war, not only here but in other industrialised countries. We have always believed in tackling crime with tough, practical measures and it is difficult to take lessons on that from the Opposition, especially when we remember the Acts that the Labour party has opposed. To remind the Opposition, I shall list those Acts: the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which strengthened police powers to stop and search suspects; the Public Order Act 1986, which gave the police better powers to deal with street disorder; the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which raised the maximum sentences for serious crimes and gave the Attorney-General a right of appeal against lenient sentences; the Criminal Justice Act 1991; and, of course, the annual renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan was absolutely right to say that we have increased the number of police officers by about 16,700 since 1979. However, we are transgressing on the sphere of responsibility of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): As the Minister has become an expert in crime figures, will he acknowledge that they have not risen inexorably year after year but that there have been fluctuations up and down? The policies and decisions of his Government on matters such as unemployment have played a part in creating the environment in which crime has increased. For instance, his Government have failed to provide the secure units that we need in Wales. He should take lessons from the Opposition.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I dealt with the problem of the secure units earlier in the debate when I do not think the hon. Gentleman was present.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly spoke about wages councils. I remind him again that the last Labour Government abolished 11 wages councils covering some 600,000 workers. Subsequent studies did not reveal any general reduction in wages as a result. Two thirds of workers covered by wages councils are paid significantly higher rates than those set by the councils. Only seven countries in the European Community have any form of national minimum wage legislation and independent research shows that the average take-home pay of United Kingdom workers is higher than that of most European countries, including France, Italy and Germany. I hope that we will not hear much more of the wages council argument.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) made a notable speech. I do not accept his assertion that the Maastricht treaty is all about centralisation. Much of the acknowledged success that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had in representing the United Kingdom in the Maastricht negotiations was in resisting tendencies elsewhere in the Community towards centralisation.

Wales has much to gain from the Europe of Maastricht. We are not merely a region on the periphery of the continent. Our success in attracting inward investment underlines that point. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already emphasised that our level of inward investment is four times what we would be expected to get in terms of our population. Our relationship with the four motor regions of Europe has brought a sustained interest in Wales as a place to do business. Through the series of structural fund programmes in recent years—for example, in industrial south Wales, Clwyd, Dyfed, Powis, and Gwynedd—and with RECHAR in the coalfields, Wales has benefited from Community funding. Our objective in the current mid-term review of the structural fund—this will interest my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnor—will be to argue for continued and increased EC assistance for as much of Wales as possible, including the rural areas.

There have been a number of references to education, again beginning with the hon. Member for Caerphilly. The implication was that the very fact of grant-maintained schools represented a grave threat to local democracy. The Education Bill, which we shall be debating tomorrow and the next day in the House, does not oblige schools to become grant maintained. Our reforms are driven by parental choice and grant-maintained status is a matter for schools' governors and parents to decide. It cannot be imposed on a school against the wishes of parents. It gives schools the ability to control the whole of their budget and it means that decisions are taken by those who are closest to the pupils. It is important to remember that grant-maintained status cannot be forced on a school. The decision rests with the school governors and the parents. Rather then eroding local democracy, we are extending it by delegating decisions to those in the best position to make decisions about priorities within schools. That is the motivation behind grant-maintained status.

The Education Bill does not weaken or abolish LEAs, although clearly the role of LEAs will evolve as more and more schools decide to leave their control and become grant maintained. We expect to see a significant grant-maintained status in Wales.

Mr. Ron Davies: Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that the Education Bill removes the requirement on local authorities to be education authorities?

Sir Wyn Roberts: No, it does not remove the requirement that an education authority be a local authority. When we discuss the Bill tomorrow and the next day, those matters will be revealed to the hon. Gentleman.

A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Members for Gower (Mr. Wardell), for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) and for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), have referred to roads in Wales. Communications have greatly improved since we came into office and the significance we attach to a high quality road network is clearly demonstrated by the high level of expenditure. Since 1979, we have spent more than £2 billion on the construction and improvement of the M4 and trunk roads in Wales, providing 22 miles of motorway

and more than 151 miles of trunk roads. More money is being spent on the M4 and trunk roads in Wales than at any time in the past. The rate of spend per head of population is greater in Wales than it is in England and Scotland. This high level of expenditure will continue. Next year, we plan to spend a record £201 million. Six major schemes are planned to start.

I announced on 8 February the acceptance of the £23 million tender from Costain Building and Civil Engineering Ltd. for the M4 link in Gwent to the second Severn crossing. Work is due to start this month on a 33-month contract. I am sure that the business community will warmly welcome this latest development and recognise that the new crossing, when completed, will provide greater economic opportunities for south Wales and many job opportunities for the area as a whole.

In addition to about 300 construction jobs that will be created by the scheme, according to the CBI, for such a project, a further 700 jobs in ancillary industries will be created or safeguarded. As I have said, our estimated expenditure on road construction in Wales for the coming financial year is a record £201 million. Again, using the CBI formula, this should provide employment opportunities for more than 6,000 people.

Mr. Flynn The Minister and the Government generally can take pride in the fact that they will create 13 new jobs in Wales by local government reorganisation, if the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) is right: we shall have 13 new lords lieutenant in Wales. What is the description of a lord lieutenant? All the past lords lieutenant for Gwent have had careers in the military, been important in the freemasons' movement and have been rich enough to take a full-time job without wages. They have all been white male gentiles. Will the Minister give us a job description for the 13 new lords lieutenant so that the long-term unemployed in Wales may apply for the posts?

Sir Wyn Roberts: I implied at the beginning of my speech that we would leave matters to do with local government reorganisation until we dealt with the governance of Wales next Monday.

Earlier this year, work began on the final section of the A55 to be dualled at Aber. Work is also under way to fill the gaps on the M4 in south Wales. Indeed, on Friday I opened the Earlswood-Lon Las section. We hope to have the remainder open by early 1995.

Local authority roads are also to benefit. In the coming year, transport grant settlement will provide support for about 27 schemes, all, I am sure, of great interest to Opposition Members.

It is clear that the Opposition cannot forgive us—especially my noble Friend Lord Walker—for introducing the valleys initiative. They have sought to belittle that achievement at every opportunity. A week ago today they launched a document that was much heralded in the press. Until a few hours ago neither my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State nor I and our officials had seen a copy of that document. We had read only reports in the press of its contents. As I understand it, the document condemns our valleys initiative in spite of the positive achievements which were described by my right hon. Friend when he announced his new five-year valley programme to begin on 1 April. I can conclude only that the Labour party's chagrin is inspired by some sort of curious pique.

In spite of all the gloom and doom of the recession, which Opposition Members have sought to magnify in every conceivable way, they cannot even accept the adjusted or unadjusted unemployment figures. They seem to have to magnify them still further.

I have to say to the people of Wales and to the House that we can take heart from my right hon. Friend's exhortation to go for growth. It is reflecting the call of our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. Of course, we can take heart from the fact that we have laid the foundations for recovery. Headline inflation is at its lowest for more than 25 years. Interest rates have been much reduced, productivity is growing at the fastest rate for five years, unit wage growth is lower than that of our principal competitors, and confidence is now improving.

We should be cheered by the *Financial Times* headline of 22 February:

"Wales will lead economic recovery".

That newspaper was reporting the views of the National Westminster bank, which said——

It being Ten o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill *[Money]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—

(a) any salaries and expenses of the Secretary and other officers and staff of the Independent Press Authority constituted under the Act;

(b) any salaries and expenses of the Press Complaints Adviser appointed under the Act;

(c) subject to a limit specified by the Secretary of State, any expenses necessarily incurred by the members of the Authority in connection with their duties; and

(d) any other expenses of a Minister of the Crown or of the Authority attributable to the Act.—*[Mr. Robert. G. Hughes.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): May we take it that the motions on the Order Paper are formal motions and that there is no suggestion that the Government support the Bills attached to them?

Madam Speaker: At the moment we are dealing with the motion relating to the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill.

Mr. Bottomley: It was to both that Bill and the following Bill—the Shops (Amendment) Bill—that I was referring. I am not asking for a reply, but I wish to put on record the fact that I presume that the motions do not commit the Government to supporting the Bills.

10.2 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): My hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) knows that the money resolution must be adopted by the House before a Standing Committee can consider those provisions of the Freedom and Responsibility of the Press Bill that give rise to public expenditure. The Government are happy to move the necessary resolution to enable the Committee to consider the Bill. As my hon. Friend knows, it is of no broader significance than that.

Mr. Bottomley: On that basis, I shall not oppose the money resolution. However, I hope that the Bill makes no further progress after its Committee stage.

Question put and agreed to.

SHOPS (AMENDMENT) BILL *[MONEY]*

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Shops (Amendment) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

MERCHANT SHIPPING (REGISTRATION, ETC.) BILL *[WAYS AND MEANS]*

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Merchant Shipping (Registration, etc.) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment of any fees received by the Secretary of State into the Consolidated Fund—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

ENVIRONMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Eric Pickles and Mr. Gary Streeter be discharged from the Environment Committee and Mr. Peter Ainsworth and Mr. Harold Elletson be added to the Committee—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Ordered,

That Mr. Gyles Brandreth be discharged from the National Heritage Committee and Mr. John Sykes be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Ray Powell, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Child Abduction

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

10.3 pm

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): Having submitted applications for this debate in November last year, I am delighted that I have had the good fortune to have secured the debate and to be able to raise the serious subject of child abduction. My endeavour is to bring to the attention of Ministers and the public the abject misery and despair endured by a woman when her child is taken from her and transferred to a country where the customs and laws are so different from those in the United Kingdom and when our laws have no particular relevance, especially in the case that I shall outline.

A constituent of mine, Pauline Ibsen, contacted me for support and assistance in her efforts to retrieve her daughter Layla, who had been taken by her natural father, a Libyan national, and transported to his country. The history of the case is that Pauline met Abdul Ibziou while at college and they decided to marry, and out of that marriage a daughter, Layla, was born. The family went to live in Libya for about a year but, sadly, the happiness did not last. Pauline could not settle in Libya and she longed for her native England. The relationship between husband and wife began to deteriorate and the family eventually returned to this country, where they stayed together for another two years.

By 1983, Layla was five years of age and was living with her mother in England and attending school here. The marriage had ended and the couple had separated in 1983, with Abdul returing to Libya. On the father's return to the United Kingdom in 1985, his demands for greater access to his daughter intensified. Pauline, who had never prohibited access, became deeply concerned for her daughter's safety, and so made her a ward of the British courts—assuming that would give them some security.

Pauline was always of the opinion that Layla should have her father's company and love, and would not deny either father or daughter the opportunity to be together.

In August 1985 the father applied to the courts to allow Layla to spend one month's holiday with him in Libya. That was agreed, and after the father swore on the Koran in court and gave Pauline his honoured word that he would return their daughter to England after the vacation, Pauline considered and accepted Abdul's promise. It was arranged that the visit could be an annual event.

Layla accompanied her father to Libya but, regrettably, she was never returned. Pauline was suffering from anguish and sought advice from the British courts, which in turn ordered the father to return Layla to this country. All that was to no avail. Pauline was also advised by the British interests section in Tripoli to take the case to a Libyan court. Regrettably, being alone and of limited financial means—and however determined Pauline was to retrieve her daughter—the situation had become far too complex for Pauline to comprehend, and confusion and desperation set in.

Pauline paid a visit to Libya and met the father and Layla, and after much pleading, she was given an assurance that the father and daughter would return to England at a later date. Even though visas were obtained, that promise was never honoured and Layla remained in Libya. Pauline's world had now collapsed around her.

In 1988, Pauline graduated after studying as an art student in Manchester, and had more time to attempt to visit her daughter. Arrangements were made for a further visit to Libya. Once again, promises to return Layla were broken. This time, however, Pauline gained the impression that something had happened—something that she could not identify, but the atmosphere concerned her.

Her doubts were proved correct. Abdul had met another woman and shortly after had remarried. Communication between Pauline and Layla then became extremely difficult. There was no response to letters, the family telephone was disconnected, and only a telegram reached Layla—who eventually spoke to her mother from a post office telephone. Abdul had a new wife and a new home, and Layla was left with her grandparents, who were meant to look after her welfare. Events proved exactly the opposite to be the case. The roles were reversed. Layla now attends to all the needs of her grandparents. Pauline had to bear another bitter experience. She had always been prepared to allow Layla's father access to his daughter, but was now denied access herself.

On a further visit to Libya, Pauline never contemplated the bizarre adventure that she and her daughter were to embark upon. After obtaining a visa from the Libyan interest section in London, Pauline made her way to Egypt via Benghazi—a single woman, vulnerable, alone, in a strange place that had changed out of all recognition since her last visit. She tried to make some sense to strangers in a foreign tongue in an effort to find the house where Layla was living with her grandparents. It was a nightmare. Eventually, she located the house and met her daughter again. In spite of an initially hostile reception, she was allowed to remain, and won the acceptance of the family. It was during their conversations—when mother and daughter were alone—that the macabre plan was hatched.

By now, Layla was 14 years old, and had grown considerably. She took her Libyan grandmother's passport, then dressed in the style of a local elderly woman and attempted to escape from the house and from Libya, and to make for home—England—with her mother. Having obtained the plane tickets, they waited until 3 am, packed their cases and, using a ladder, scaled the wall of the grandparents' house. The cases became heavy to carry, and they had to rest, hiding in bushes—or anywhere that would give them cover—until they obtained a taxi, which took them to the airport. They went through the check-in and passport control; they thought they were home and dry. Then disaster struck: a Libyan woman security official demanded to see Layla's face. Their crude plan had failed.

The events that I have described are not fiction, something from a novel or an adventure film; they actually happened. Desperate people do irrational things. After being placed under house arrest, Pauline was allowed to leave Libya. By now, believing that she would never see her daughter again, she was in a state of deep depression; so, on her behalf, I visited the head of the Libyan interest section of the Saudi Arabian embassy here in London, where I received a sympathetic hearing from a Mr. Ahmed Ameish. He agreed to issue Pauline with a visa to visit Libya again. Pauline was grateful for the kind offer, and expressed remorse for attempting to smuggle the child out of Libya.

Regrettably, however, without the assurance for the mother and daughter to meet, the journey would be a pure waste of money and time, and would possibly mean more heartbreak for Pauline. The Minister will be aware that

[Mr. Robert Litherland]

Libya is not a signatory to the Hague European conventions, which put this particular mother at a severe disadvantage.

In these circumstances, a child—a British national, a ward of court—can be taken from this country with little or no redress. That drove a caring mother to the point of desperation, and forced her to take absurd risks to be reunited with her daughter. I have brought just one case to the House's attention; it is estimated that some 1,200 children are abducted from the United Kingdom every year. The case of my constituent Pauline Ibsen epitomises the anguish and human misery that parents and children can experience in such heartbreaking and harrowing circumstances.

To whom can parents such as Pauline turn? The organisation Reunite, the National Council for Abducted Children, has given tremendous assistance to people like her, who find themselves in such a sad predicament. It offers advice, information and a professional counselling service. Reunite is also active in raising public awareness, and addresses international conferences on the subject of child abduction. The organisation has co-operated more closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in recent times and there is now a nominated official in that Department with whom Reunite can liaise and look forward to improved communication. That may lead to an increase in the number of abducted children who are returned, and also to an increase in the number of access visits. Despite the restrictions on the activities of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in child abduction cases, Reunite believes that there are actions that officials, especially those overseas, can take that would be of advantage to the progress of a case: for example, in obtaining visas, the protection of a parent trying to contact a child or children or the speed at which a court case is conducted.

The handling of more than 600 cases a year, the expansion of its activities to meet the need of parents and the need to carry out such vital work has obviously made Reunite dependent on financial assistance. I urge the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to support the continuation of financial backing to allow this essential organisation to carry on its extremely important work.

I make three pleas to the Minister: first, for the assistance of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to seek agreement with the Libyan authorities to allow Pauline Ibsen to meet her daughter, Layla, even if it is a controlled meeting away from the grandparents' home in Libya if necessary—anywhere is suitable as long as they may meet again. Hopefully, the meeting will lead to regular meetings and the humane right of a mother and daughter to be together.

Secondly, I urge the Minister to make other countries aware of their obligations under the conventions and to implore them to act with the expediency with which United Kingdom courts process cases involving the abduction of children. To most parents, the conventions are irrelevant and the prospects of the children being returned are bleak because there is no clear interpretation of the procedures. Foreign courts can get bogged down in legal arguments, placing great stress and anxiety on the parents. The booklet issued by the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Foreign Office says:

> "Courts abroad cannot pass down judgments which are contrary to their own law. They are often not willing to oppose family, religious or cultural traditions which are customary, even if not obligatory, in their country. In some countries the law is based strictly on such traditions."

It goes on:

> "Every country has exclusive jurisdiction within its own territory, and no country can force another to decide cases on enforced laws in a certain way. Court orders of one country are not usually enforceable in another country."

That is the dilemma facing every parent, even in countries that are signatories to the convention.

My third plea is for support to enable Reunite to carry out its work on child abduction. Television programmes such as Channel 4's "Cutting Edge" endeavour to highlight the problem of child abduction, but that is a one-off programme. What is required is the sensitive and professional approach that Reunite can offer. It is the only agency to offer assistance in these cases and in its experience a good percentage of those assisted by the Lord Chancellor's Department usually turn to Reunite for the support and counselling that that Department is unable to provide. Please do not allow an organisation such as Reunite to be treated as a Cinderella group that can be ignored and can lose out when financing priorities are under consideration.

In a recent letter, Reunite concluded that it not only enhances the role of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by resolving many of these situations but, working in an international arena, assists in reducing the workload of that Department and therefore would deem it appropriate for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to provide support or financial backing. The all-party child abduction group of the House has the support of more than 100 hon. Members, which signifies the importance and seriousness with which child abduction is treated. I only hope that my small contribution this evening, as a member of that group, will help the plight of mothers such as my constituent Pauline Ibsen and help to sustain an organisation such as Reunite.

My first plea is for the long term and involves standardisation of procedure in court cases in signatory countries to the convention. The second is for the short term and involves adequate funding for Reunite. My third request, for which I plead most strongly, is that the Government immediately do everything possible to arrange a meeting between Pauline Ibsen and her daughter Layla.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): This is an extremely sad case, and I have every sympathy with Mrs. Ibsen. I admire the way in which the hon. Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) has followed the case so closely on behalf of his constituent.

Sadly, it is not the only such case that has come to the attention of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Many hundreds of children are taken out of Britain every year, usually, but not always, by their fathers and often in defiance of court orders. I have to deal with almost all the cases that come to the Foreign Office's attention, and there is no doubt that cases involving the separation of parents from child, often in tragic circumstances as described by the hon. Gentleman, are very distressing for the parent who is often left bereft in this country, and for the child or children involved.

If it were possible to take action to alter the circumstances in this or any of the cases which have passed across my desk, I should not hesitate to do so, but finding a solution to cases of child abduction is not easy. It is all the more difficult when, as in this case, the child has been taken to a country which, as the hon. Gentleman understands, is not a signatory to the European convention on recognition and enforcement of decisions concerning custody of children or to the Hague convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction.

Since 1986, a total of 29 countries, including the United Kingdom, have ratified one or other of those conventions. I assure the hon. Gentleman that we take every possible step to ensure that other countries are aware of the conventions and invite them to sign them. Under these arrangements, children are required to be returned to the country from which they have been taken unless there are exceptional circumstances.

When children are taken to a country such as Libya which is not a signatory to those conventions, no legal framework—a framework which, I hasten to add, we have done much to build—exists within which the return of children can be pursued by the Lord Chancellor's Department. Action can then only be taken privately through the courts of the country in question, and those courts may or may not take account of any British court orders in respect of the child. The Foreign Office cannot intervene in the judicial process of a foreign sovereign state, and there are further complications.

Most children of a marriage between people of different nationalities acquire the nationalities of both parents, regardless of the place of their birth. In cases where children have dual nationality and are in the country of their second nationality, in this case Libya, we and our embassies and high commissions are prevented by international law from making formal representations to the Government of that country. I stress the word "formal" because we can make informal representations.

Such children are viewed in international law as being in their own country and are subject to that country's law. Libya does not even recognise the concept of dual nationality. Notwithstanding the fact that Layla was born in the United Kingdom, in Libya she is regarded as a Libyan. Experience has shown that attempts to recover children through the courts in Islamic countries carries its own peculiar difficulties. It is an important principle in Islamic countries that the child should be brought up in the Islamic faith. There is a bias against the non-Muslim parent in many Islamic countries' legal systems. Even in countries in which Sharia law is not rigorously applied —Libya is one such country—obtaining an order for custody or for access is by no means easy. Short of coming to an arrangement with the estranged spouse, recourse to the local courts is the only way open to the deprived parent.

I do not wish to paint too negative a picture in describing the constraints on the help that we can offer. The Foreign Office has produced a booklet explaining what we in our posts overseas can and cannot do to help people. A copy is in the Library of the House. Ratification of the Hague and European conventions is one of the positive steps that we have taken and urge on other countries to provide a framework for the return of abducted children. We are active in discussions on these problems with our European Community partners. We are prepared to make representations to convention countries that drag their feet over procedures.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the work of Reunite. I pay tribute this evening to what we regard as important work and to the assistance that Reunite has managed to give the hon. Gentleman's constituent and the constituents of other hon. Members.

In Layla's case, our consular officials have also tried to be as helpful as possible behind the scenes. In this case the Italians, our protecting power in Libya—we do not have diplomatic relations—have been very helpful when we have had to call on their services. The head of our interests section in Libya has approached the Libyan authorities informally several times on Mrs. Ibsen's behalf since Layla was taken there in 1985. The Libyan authorities have responded constructively.

The head of the interests section was allowed to see Layla and her father in December last year at the foreign liaison bureau in Benghazi. Part of the meeting was held in the presence of two officials of the bureau, but our official was also allowed to speak directly to Layla and to her father in private.

If Mrs. Ibsen travels to Libya, our interests section stands ready to help in setting up a meeting with her daughter, but such a meeting would need the consent of both the father and Layla. We cannot work on any other basis.

The fact remains that diplomatic approaches can have only so much effect. In the absence of a Libyan court order to the contrary, under Libyan family law and tradition, Layla needs the permission of her father to leave the country. Our staff in the Foreign Office and our interests section abroad can do nothing to circumvent that requirement.

As we have repeatedly advised Mrs. Ibsen, she must pursue custody through the Libyan courts. Only the Libyan family court can decide the issue. We have suggested to Mrs. Ibsen that her best course of action would be to seek advice from a Libyan lawyer. He could advise her on local procedure and how she could best present her case to the Tripoli family court. With Layla on the verge of womanhood, I hope that Mrs. Ibsen will be able to take that advice as soon as possible so that progress can be made to bring this sad case to an early conclusion.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I do not want to prolong this sad debate. We all recognise that there are particular difficulties with Libya because it is not a signatory to the various conventions and because of relations between our Government and the Libyan Government. Nevertheless, my discussions with representatives of the Libyan authorities have shown that they are genuinely keen to resolve family-centred matters outside the normal diplomatic regime. The Libyan Government might seriously consider a suggestion by the British Government for some reciprocal arrangements for visits. In the case that my hon. Friend raises, that could be especially important and would be desperately sought by other mothers of children who have been taken away.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I know that the hon. Gentleman and the other Manchester Members present have taken a great interest in the case.

All that I can say to the hon. Gentleman is that we will help to facilitate any sensible idea. We are more than

[Mr. Lennox-Boyd]

happy that officials should discuss the matter with the hon. Member for Manchester, Central. Anything we do would have to be with the consent of both the father and Mrs. Ibsen. There is no other way in which the Foreign Office can act. If there is an order of the Libyan court, we can act accordingly. In the absence of an order, we must act with the consent of the parties.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 2 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

English (Key Stage 3)

1. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received in the last month on key stage 3 English.

14. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of the responses he has received regarding the key stage 3 English tests for 1993 have been critical of his proposals in their present form.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I have received various letters on key stage 3 English. These raise a wide range of issues. I made an announcement about them on 19 February.

Mr. Hanson: Is the Secretary of State aware that today hon. Members on both sides of the House will have received a further letter from teachers' representatives showing that 99 per cent. of teachers involved in the tests have described them as inadequately planned and prepared? In the face of growing opposition from teachers, parents and school governors, why does the Secretary of State persist in pushing forward with the tests? Is it not time that he postponed them?

Mr. Patten: I am rather surprised at the hon. Gentleman's question. He cannot be aware that the Secondary Heads Association, the National Association of Head Teachers, the Professional Association of Teachers and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers have all welcomed my announcement on 19 February. Characteristically, the two TUC-related trades unions—the National Union of Teachers and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers—continue with their threats. In the face of evidence of growing illiteracy, it is critically important that the tests go ahead this year and in future, so that we can deal with the problem, which I am afraid has been growing since the 1960s.

Mr. Jamieson: The Secretary of State will have received many representations from my constituency in Plymouth, from Devon and throughout the country regarding key stage 3 English tests. Last week, he will have received a letter from the Tory chair of a governing body—[HON. MEMBERS: "Chair?"] That is how he describes himself. He is the chair of Devonport high school for boys, a grammar school in Plymouth, and he strongly objects to the tests. Is not the fact that the Secretary of State has had to defer publication of the test results this year an indication that the tests are flawed? In the light of that, will he make them optional this year, so that governors can make a proper choice about what is right for their children?

Mr. Patten: I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstands a serious situation in the teaching of English. Recent independent evidence, made available and published two Fridays ago, showed that up to a third of young people leaving school aged 16 and going to further education colleges needed remedial help with understanding English because they had the reading age of 14-year-olds. That shows the urgency of the situation and the necessity of having a test at 14 as soon as possible, to identify those young men and women who need help with grappling with the English language—a problem which should have been sorted out long before they reached the age of 16.

Mr. Cormack: Is my right hon. Friend aware that most people who have studied his statement on 19 February are grateful for it, but hope that he will keep in close touch with heads of English and others, and monitor closely the first unpublished tests?

Mr. Patten: I welcome my hon. Friend's welcome and am pleased to see him back in the Chamber after his recent ill health. What he says is right—we should monitor carefully the results of the tests this summer. They will be made known to parents and we shall publish the national picture, which I hope will not give me cause for concern, as I fear that it may—I hope that I am proved wrong. We shall also ask the inspectorate—the Office for Standards in Education—to examine the conduct of the tests. As each test is introduced each year—whether it is key stage English 3, the GCSE, or the A-level—it is preparation for the next year's tests, and each test is refined and developed. Teachers have been teaching children approaching the age of 14 this year key stage English 3 for three years and have had a lot of time for preparation. They have nothing to fear and everything to gain from the tests.

Mr. Ward: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his remarks. Can he explain why any competent teacher should have anything to fear from demonstrating that he has reached the standards expected of him?

Mr. Patten: I think that most teachers are highly professional and I pay tribute to our hard-working teachers. Sometimes, however, there is a bit of fear of the unknown and of something new. People do not like their performance to be exposed, professionals in particular. We in this place are exposed in our performance every day. When something new comes along, sometimes people are rather frightened of it, but teachers of English should remember that, last year, when the tests for maths and science were first held, they were universally reported on by the inspectorate as having been successful and enjoyed by pupils. Truancy on that day went right down, because 98 per cent. of children turned up to do those tests, which was far more than are normally in school. Children will enjoy the new test and will benefit from it.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Leaving aside the Secretary of State's new answer for truancy, which seems to rely on having tests every day, the Labour party welcomes his partial climbdown regarding the reporting of the results of the key

stage 3 test. The Opposition do not accept, however, that those tests are essential for identifying illiteracy, although we find it interesting that the Secretary of State referred to "growing illiteracy" after the Government have been in power for 14 years. Will the Secretary of State now follow through the logic of his own acknowledgment that the tests are flawed and postpone them for a year so that parents and teachers can have proper confidence in tests that have been properly trialled?

Mr. Patten: I am very sorry that the hon. Lady should sneer at what the Government, in a coalition of interested people, are doing to try to deal with the issue of truancy up and down the land. That shows the attitude of those on the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Lady has displayed what I have always suspected about her; she does not support the concept of testing.

We have seen the shadow Home Secretary trying to slip into the clothes of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, which in itself is a difficult task. We see the modernisers of the Labour party trying to come aboard a Conservative agenda on law and order. I am afraid that no such Opposition modernisers have reached the Labour Front Bench. I greatly fear that if the NUT and the NAS/UWT in different parts of the country suggest boycotting the tests, we will find the hon. Lady, who is led by the nose by the producer lobby, backing those trade unions in any boycotts.

Further Education

2. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to encourage more 16-year-olds to attend colleges of further education.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): The Government are committed to raising levels of participation and achievement. The proportion of 16-year-olds in education and training has now reached 87 per cent., which is an increase of 20 points since 1979. Our public expenditure plans already provide for 25 per cent. more students in further education over the next three years.

Mr. Arnold: My hon. Friend will be aware of the £6 million investment that has been approved by the Government for the brand new campus of the North-West Kent college at Lower Higham road in Chalk near Gravesend. May I rest assured that my hon. Friend will give maximum encouragement to my constituents aged 16 and older to take advantage of the excellent courses to be found in that college in electronics, engineering, catering and many other interesting subjects?

Mr. Boswell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments. I am aware of Kent LEA's current provisional capital resources for the county, which are now being considered, taking account of competing claims, as I am sure that my hon. Friend will understand. An announcement on these matters will be made shortly.

Mr. Hardy: Although the House would welcome provision to encourage more 16-year-olds to stay on in education, does the Minister accept that the findings of the Audit Commission, which were published recently, justify the concern felt about a number of students already in further education, not least because of the high drop-out rate? Does he accept that something needs to be done urgently to provide the motivation for young people who can see little point in pursuing further education when there is no prospect before them other than unemployment?

Mr. Boswell: I, too, have studied the recent Audit Commission report and welcome its examination of the subject. We clearly need to secure the best possible value for the existing and enhanced provision that we are making for further education. We need to have higher standards and less drop-out. The figures that the Audit Commission exposed revealed a number of qualifying factors on the drop-out rate, including those who move to other courses in the same institution or to other sorts of study or directly into employment. We need to ensure the best possible counselling for our young people before they go into further education courses, a reasonable range of courses, proper advice while they are on those courses and, above all, proper vocational paths, which we are securing through national vocational qualifications and general national vocational qualifications.

Grant-maintained Schools

3. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many Wiltshire schools have opted for grant-maintained status in the *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary sectors.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): One primary school and three secondary schools in Wiltshire are already operating as self-governing grant-maintained state schools or have been approved for GM status. A further three primary and two secondary schools have voted in favour of applying for GM status and have applications in the pipeline.

Mr. Coombs: Is my hon. Friend aware that four schools to which my constituents send their children in the Swindon area have had ballots and negatived the proposal to go for grant-maintained status? Does my hon. Friend share my disappointment at that outcome, which has been largely a result of general election-style canvassing by Labour supporters? Does he agree that the only people to lose out as a result are the children in those schools? If he does agree, what does he see as the way forward?

Mr. Forth: I am grateful, but, frankly, not surprised, that my hon. Friend has cited an example from his constituency. Up and down the country there have been shady goings-on with regard to grant-maintained ballots, emanating from some politically motivated people in virtually every local education authority. However, in spite of that, so far the rate of approval of yes votes in grant-maintained ballots has been 80 per cent. and in February it was 82 per cent. We can take great encouragement from that. There are measures already in the Education Bill, which we shall be discussing on Report later today, designed to improve the balance provided to parents, by providing for modest sums to be made available to governing bodies for expenses incurred in promoting grant-maintained status and limiting local education authority expenditure on publications associated with ballots. That will redress the balance between authorities and governing bodies. We believe that those and other measures in the Bill will correct the imbalance that has existed until now and ensure that parents come forward with informed and constructive views.

Graduate Employment

4. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he will next meet the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals to discuss graduate employment.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend meets the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals from time to time to discuss general higher education issues. He has not received a specific request to discuss graduate employment.

Mr. Sheerman: Do not the ghastly numbers of unemployed young talent show that a tremendous opportunity for our country has been missed? In a week when President Clinton has introduced a bold and imaginative new initiative for young people, is it not about time that the Government had the imagination to use the talents of young people to do something about the urgent social and industrial problems of our country?

Mr. Boswell: The hon. Gentleman perhaps forgets that we have already rapidly expanded the number of students in higher education at the expense of the taxpayer. I would not suggest to the House that graduate employment should be immune to the recession. It is important that we build on the existing high participation rates in higher education and the growing contribution and involvement of young people in further education. That is the best possible thing that those young people can do if there are employment difficulties. I strongly advise them to get the skills that they require, ready for when the upturn comes.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that in a period of world recession, anyone who is fortunate enough to achieve education in the higher sphere—particularly in a university—should consider carefully and seriously the discipline that they expect to study, if they are to look forward to the opportunities that will arise when the world comes out of recession?

Mr. Boswell: As ever, my hon. Friend is on a good point. It is important that those at university should make the best possible use of their time there. There is no better way of ensuring that this country comes out of recession at the head of the line than having the highest possible ratio of skills in our population.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister accept that work and education are the foundation of human well-being and that the willingness of people to be educated and trained and to work is a nation's greatest asset? Given that undergraduates are, by definition, the best and most expensively educated human assets that this country has, does the Minister's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) indicate that neither the Minister nor any of his colleagues has taken a single initiative in discussing the issue of graduate unemployment?

Mr. Boswell: The Department primarily responsible for employment matters is the Department of Employment. The original question asked specifically when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will next meet the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals. As and when it makes such a request, I shall respond. I have shown the House that we have increased the involvement of our younger people in higher and further education. We plan to continue doing that and to have the best-educated and best-skilled work force in employment, to exploit in future the competitive advantage that skills can bring to industry.

Further Education

5. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the drop-out rate of students on full-time courses after the age of 16 years.

8. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the proportion of students in full-time education post-16 who are failing to complete their course of studies.

Mr. Patten: I am very concerned by the recent report from the Audit Commission and the Office for Standards in Education, which identified unacceptably high drop-out rates among 16 to 19-year-olds. Schools and colleges should tackle that urgently. Our policies of improving the information and qualifications available to young people will help them make better choices and strengthen their motivation to succeed. We will publish information about vocational examination results of schools and colleges to encourage that.

Mr. Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that students sometimes experience great difficulty in transferring to not only sixth forms but universities? As someone who lasted only six months at university, I understand those difficulties. Will my right hon. Friend assure the House that his Department will carefully examine the way in which universities and sixth-form colleges approach that aspect? I pay tribute to Bournemouth university and to Weymouth sixth-form college for the way in which they help students to select relevant courses and to make a successful transition. Will my right hon. Friend consider publishing college and university drop-out rates, so that students—such as my own four children, who are all receiving a state education—will be able to make sensible decisions on their choice of university education?

Mr. Patten: I join my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Mr. Bruce) in paying tribute to the university and sixth-form college in his constituency, both of which are excellent. I agree also that the drop-out rate should cause us concern. I believe that it is partly due to young people making the wrong career choice—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) referred earlier—and partly to young people not receiving closer supervision at school and closer instruction at college. That is one reason why we shall make in the next three years a 25 per cent. increase in the number of students entering further education colleges. As young people make decisions about which career path to follow in vocational or academic education, it is critically important that they have the information that they need. I said in my original answer that we will publish the results of vocational examinations. I think that my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset is on to something good, and perhaps we should publish drop-out rates as well. They might tell us something about not only young people but colleges.

Mr. Raynsford: I am sure that the House agrees that the present drop-out rate of one in three among students over

16 is unacceptable, as the Secretary of State said. Does the right hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the Government must take a major share of the responsibility for that? It is not just a question involving colleges and universities—though they have a role. The Government's responsibility is in respect of poverty. Do the Government realise that until they reverse their mistaken decision to freeze the student grant and to enable students to have an adequate standard of living, drop-outs will continue at an unacceptably high level?

Mr. Patten: It is not for me to say whether the hon. Gentleman's question relates directly to the question on the Order Paper. I can say, however, that there is no evidence of any fall in the number of people—from all social and economic backgrounds—who enter further and higher education.

The hon. Gentleman could usefully talk to councils such as—to name but a few—Knowsley, Derbyshire, Camden, Islington and Hammersmith and Fulham, where the hon. Gentleman was in a previous incarnation. Those councils have a lamentable record, keeping students waiting for mandatory grants that they should have received many weeks ago.

Mr. Forman: Notwithstanding the difficulties identified in this and earlier questions, does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's record, and the prospects for further education, are exemplary? It is important that the expansion mentioned by my right hon. Friend, and by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education, enables us to tackle more effectively both the problems of the juvenile unemployed and some of the law-and-order problems to which our right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will refer in his statement later this afternoon.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He is, in large part, the architect of the recent expansion in further education—480 colleges are involved and there will be one in or near the constituency of every hon. Member in the House—and I pay tribute to him for that.

Over the past 14 years, Conservative Governments have introduced mass education for all—not only for those under 16, but for people aged up to 18 or 19. I agree with my hon. Friend that that expansion is a great tribute to the Government. We have now achieved the staying-on levels of many of our west European counterparts, and I believe that that will affect not only the country's education, but its social stability—including the crime rate, to which my hon. Friend referred.

Madam Speaker: Order. These answers are much too long.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Audit Commission has revealed that 150,000 young people are leaving full-time courses without the qualifications for which those courses were designed. Does the Secretary of State accept that, after 14 years of Conservative government, that is a scandal? Does he accept that it is not the fault of the schools and colleges that he would seek to blame, but the Government's fault? Does he also accept that the Government's mindless view that the way in which to resolve the unemployment problem for young people is simply to get them into the colleges—again, without any recognition of the importance of quality and qualifications—gives neither the students nor the country any hope, or anything else?

The Secretary of State says——

Madam Speaker: Order. Questions are proceeding far too slowly. We want brisker questions, and I certainly want brisker answers.

Mr. Lloyd: I shall put my question very simply. After 14 years, what do the Government now intend to do about the problem?

Mr. Patten: We intend to do what I have been saying in my "much too long" answers. My replies to the hon. Gentleman's first two questions are, respectively, no and no.

Madam Speaker: That is the sort of answer that I like.

School Day

6. **Mr. Bowis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what flexibility he has given to schools on the length of the school day.

Mr. Patten: I shall try to show some improvement, Madam Speaker.

Governors have a great deal of flexibility. I am always pleased to hear when that is being used imaginatively, as I understand may be the case in Battersea technology college in my hon. Friend's constituency and as is certainly the case in the 15 excellent city technology colleges that we already have. The length of the school day should be limited only by the capacity of children to learn.

Mr. Bowis: I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. Is not flexibility one of the great, outstanding freedoms for our schools? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the key to that freedom is flexibility in regard to pay, enabling existing teachers to be paid more for the extra hours that they work and removing the need to recruit part-time extra teachers? A quick yes and yes to that question will do nicely.

Mr. Patten: In shorthand, maybe and maybe. If I may, however, I shall answer in slightly longer hand.

I am very pleased at the 30 per cent. increase in teachers' salaries over the past three years, which compares with a 16 per cent. increase across the economy as a whole. I should like teachers to be better paid and I should like the teaching profession to be even more respected. There will, however, be a twofold price for that over the years: first, the introduction of performance-related pay and, secondly, much greater flexibility in regard to hours.

Mr. Win Griffiths: In any consideration of the flexibility of the school day, will the Secretary of State issue guidance to schools on the better community use of their facilities? Would not a better way to tackle problems such as truancy be to make the school a real part of the community, instead of its being hived off in an opt-out corner and the rest of the community feeling divorced from the people using the school?

Mr. Patten: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Not only the concept but the actuality of community schools and colleges, of which there are many, should be applauded. The hon. Gentleman is right and we should do all that we can.

Grant-maintained Schools

7. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools have applied for grant-maintained status.

15. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many secondary schools have so far applied for grant-maintained status; what that is as a percentage of the total number of secondary schools in England; and in which local education authorities no grant-maintained schools have so far emerged.

Mr. Patten: I shall answer these questions as quickly as possible.

To date, 644 schools have published proposals for grant-maintained status as self-governing state schools. Four hundred and thirty one of those applications have been approved and 156 are currently under consideration. A further 68 schools have voted yes in parental ballots, but have not yet published proposals. About 13 per cent. of maintained secondary schools in England have applied for grant-maintained status.

Mr. Field: With a record like that, we are going to give my right hon. Friend an E for effort this term. Does he appreciate that the opportunity provided by grant-maintained status has shifted the balance of power so that school governors who are not politically correct are no longer sacked, as happened on the Isle of Wight under the Liberal Democrat-controlled education authority, has put an end to the councillor busybody and has given power back to the principals and parents of schools throughout the United Kingdom and the Isle of Wight?

Mr. Patten: We all know about the shameful and undemocratic practices of the Liberal Democrats on the Isle of Wight and I wholly condemn them. I believe that power is being redistributed in schools from the centre or hub of the wheel to the rim. Across the country, more parents and governors are taking control of their schools not only through grant-maintained status but through local management of schools which, four or five years ago, the Labour party so opposed.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the figures that he has just given underline the growing importance and success of the grant-maintained schools sector? Will he therefore disregard the ill-informed and ill-considered advice from certain members of the Opposition who would abolish grant-maintained schools? Will he also reflect on the number of children now being educated in the grant-maintained school sector?

Mr. Patten: The number of children in England being educated in self-governing state schools, which is what grant-maintained schools are, is 236,000. There are an awful lot of committed parents, teachers and governors and their numbers will be growing in the next year or so. Unfortunately, they know, because the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has made it clear, that there is a Labour commitment to abolish grant-maintained schools. I wonder what the modernisers in the Labour party think about that.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: Does the Secretary of State agree with the widespread concern that has been expressed about grant maintained status being granted in the primary sector, where the Government are giving no guarantees to protect funding for nursery education and, incidentally, no protection where they insist on the rationalisation of schools to remove surplus places?

Mr. Patten: The position of primary schools is clear. If they have a nursery class or stream when they become grant maintained, that is their status when the Secretary of State gives his permission for the school to become grant maintained. If not, they have to come to the Secretary of State and publish an application for a change of character.

It is good to know of the considerable interest among primary schools not only in individually becoming grant-maintained but in making use of the opportunities given in the Education Bill, which we shall be discussing later today on the Floor of the House, for them to help each other in a grant-maintained cluster.

Mr. Don Foster: Does the Secretary of State believe that schools applying for grant-maintained status are exercising what he falsely believes to be parental choice and democracy? If so, is he willing to extend those principles further and allow future generations of parents to exercise parental choice in voting back out of grant-maintained status into LEA control, or is his belief in democracy really a sham and does he believe in it only when it supports Tory party dogma?

Mr. Patten: For a Liberal, the hon. Gentleman is showing appalling contempt for the rule of the ballot box because in eight out of 10 ballots for grant-maintained schools, the vote is an overwhelming yes and, generally speaking, between 60 and 70 per cent. of parents entitled to vote turn out to vote—far more than in a local government election. The hon. Gentleman is pouring contempt and scorn on the parents who voted in favour of the two grant-maintained schools in Bath which he has done nothing but attack since he has been a Member of Parliament.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a recent poll organised by the BBC on Baverstock school in Birmingham found that although, at the time it opted out, 75 per cent. of parents voted in favour, two years later, 99 per cent. of those people eligible to vote were in favour of the opting out? Does not that show how popular grant-maintained status becomes over a period of time and how idiotic it is for the Opposition to threaten to abolish grant-maintained schools?

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The BBC broadcast the results of such a poll to which I listened carefully, as I always do. It shows increasing support for Baverstock school as a grant-maintained school. It is one of the biggest schools in the country with, I think, more than 2,000 pupils. After two years' experience, almost every parent of a child at that school has said that they wish it to remain grant maintained and welcome the fact that it has become a successful beacon in Birmingham's educational landscape.

Expenditure Per Pupil

9. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on comparative levels of expenditure per pupil in individual local authorities.

Mr. Forth: Education standard spending assessments allow for variations in the costs that authorities in different parts of the country incur in providing a common standard of service. Differences in levels of actual expenditure per pupil depend, however, on spending decisions taken by local education authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: The Minister will be aware that there is a school of thought that people born in Yorkshire are naturally more intelligent than the rest of the nation. Do the Government subscribe to that school of thought, or are there other reasons why pupils in Wakefield are allowed £1,000 a year less expenditure per head than pupils in Conservative Wandsworth?

Mr. Forth: I might be tempted to subscribe to the view that the further north one is born the more intelligent one is, but I will leave that to the hon. Gentleman. The hon. Gentleman must not get into the business of trying to make invidious but specious comparisons about expenditure per pupil across the country, for a number of reasons. In several authorities expenditure per pupil is less than in his own; his is 15th off the bottom of that particular league table, if he wishes to look at it in that way. More particularly, there is no proven relation whatever between expenditure per pupil and quality of education. Many excellent local education authorities have amply demonstrated that it is the quality and outputs that count, not the money that is shoved in at the other end.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend confirm that point from the evidence of going round the excellent schools in Surrey and particularly in Esher, where teachers are making use of the local management budget and getting tremendous output, very high-quality results and low levels of truancy? That is what teaching is all about: the commitment of the teachers and the headmasters in the schools.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. It is typical that from the Government side of the House we have an acknowledgement of how quality of education comes about, whereas from the Opposition we simply have an obsession with money and expenditure. That sums up as well as anything could the different attitude to education of the two sides of the House.

Universities (Funding)

10. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the funding of universities.

Mr. Boswell: We regularly receive representations about a range of higher education matters, including funding.

Mr. Griffiths: Why is not the Secretary of State intervening to stop institutions such as Edinburgh university and Royal Holloway and Bedford New college selling priceless art treasures by artists such as Turner and Gainsborough to balance their books? Will the Secretary of State intervene to stop universities selling off the family silver?

Mr. Boswell: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's sense of geography. He will know that the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council will shortly take over responsibility for—*[Interruption.]* One at a time, please. The Universities Funding Council is responsible now; the hon. Gentleman is right in that respect. He will also know that there is a Charity Commission and an export licensing procedure under which such matters will be considered. I can also tell the hon. Gentleman that the real resources made available to the university sector are at record levels. The problems of particular institutions need to be addressed by those institutions in connection with the relevant funding councils.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that our system of student support is more generous than that in any other country in the western world? Will he further confirm that the reaction to student loans has been for more people to apply to go to university, not fewer, as the Opposition forecast?

Mr. Boswell: Not only is the provision for student support one of the most generous, if not the most generous, in the western world, but support for the university sector generally through the taxpayer, running at £4 billion a year, is extremely generous and contributes to excellent results.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

11. **Mr. Steinberg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about pupil-teacher ratios in all schools and separately in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: As at January 1992 the overall pupil-teacher ratio in England stood at 17·44:1, compared with 18·94:1 in 1979. The within school pupil-teacher ratios were 22·21:1 for primary schools and 15·83:1 for secondary schools.

Mr. Steinberg: Is the Minister aware that throughout the country many teachers have lost their jobs because of the funding arrangements? In my constituency, for example, Gilesgate primary school has lost three teachers over the past three years, which has had a detrimental effect on the pupil-teacher ratio. When will the Government accept that more resources are needed so that schools can pay their teachers and give children an equal opportunity in education?

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman seems to resent the fact that through local management of schools and grant-maintained status we are now giving the responsibility for staffing and the management of schools to governors and heads. They are the people in the best position to make arrangements for teaching in schools and classrooms and it is to them that we entrust that responsibility, which they are discharging admirably.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Does my hon. Friend agree that one way in which local education authorities can improve pupil-teacher ratios is to dismantle the expensive administration of school meals and devolve the arrangements to parents? Does he recall that my local authority employed more than 170 additional teachers by dispensing with that apparatus?

Mr. Forth: In the matter of meals I defer to my hon. Friend, who is the House's expert. He has made an important point—the more opportunities that those who are responsible for managing schools, such as governors,

heads and staff, take to alter the arrangements so as to deliver the best quality of education and the maximum expenditure in the classroom, the better the quality of education will be. We want to see the most flexible arrangements and the greatest possible variety of arrangements in schools throughout the country, as befits local requirements.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: Does the Minister believe that class sizes matter in terms of the quality of education delivered to our children?

Mr. Forth: I do not believe that there is any proven connection between class sizes and quality of education.

Mr. Haselhurst: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is an interesting fact that about 14 years ago the discussions were about reducing the size of classes that still contained more than 40 pupils, whereas today the discussion is about removing the remaining classes with more than 30 pupils? Is not that a measure of the progress that has been made under the Government in improving teacher-pupil ratios?

Mr. Forth: Yes, indeed. The vast bulk of our children are educated in classes of fewer than 30. The average class size is well under 30. It would be wrong to focus exclusively and entirely on that. It may be a factor, but it is by no means the definitive factor.

Physical Education

12. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what extra support will be made available to schools to assist with the implementation of physical education in the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: In 1993-94, the grants for education support and training programme will support £180 million of national curriculum-related activity, including £85 million of expenditure for national curriculum books, equipment and training. It will be for schools to decide exactly how that money is spent.

Ms. Hoey: Is the Minister aware of the specific difficulties of physical education, especially in our inner city schools? Does he realise that in key stage 1 the assessment will require more than 900 individual tests which must be carried out by a teacher? Does he agree that more resources must be targeted for physical education, or that basic skill will not be learnt by children in primary schools?

Mr. Forth: Of course, I appreciate the points that the hon. Lady has made, but, with the exception of mathematics and science teachers in primary schools, we have not so far been persuaded that to ring fence expenditure to specific curriculum items is the correct way to go. Therefore, for physical education, as for other subjects in the curriculum, we believe that it is right for local decisions to be made on the use, distribution and prioritisation of the resources that we have given to education. We believe that those resources are more than adequate to carry out the task.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Oppenheim: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the more power that we can extend to individuals by devolving authority and decision making in our schools and the national health service, the better? Is not the best way to give individuals more responsibility and more control over their lives by reducing the power of the state? Is it the case that, on this crucial test, those who belatedly speak the language of conservatism but still think like socialists, such as the Leader of the Opposition, fail dismally?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in his description. We believe in giving individuals more choice and more power. I fear that that is not the policy of the Labour party. Labour Members want less choice and more government, rather than more choice and less power for government.

Mr. John Smith: In that case, can the Prime Minister tell us why he is opposed to a freedom of information Act?

The Prime Minister: Because we are extending freedom of information in practical ways—unlike the right hon. and learned Gentleman, who would not give information to parents about schools or to users of the health service about hospitals. That is the sort of information which people in the country want, not the sort of information that the right hon. and learned Gentleman concerns himself about.

Mr. John Smith: If the Prime Minister is genuinely committed to giving information and to open government, can I give him a simple test? How many billions of pounds were lost in the currency dealings in the fiasco of Black Wednesday?

The Prime Minister: As a former shadow Chancellor, if the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not know that no one knows what the figures will be until those things are unwound, he should not be sitting where he is.

Mr. John Smith: Is not it abundantly clear that the Prime Minister either does not know how many billions of pounds were lost or is unwilling to tell us? Does not he understand that there is a crucial difference between the national interest and covering up the incompetence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

The Prime Minister: We are dealing with the national interest day after day, with no assistance whatever from the right hon. and learned Gentleman.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Could the Prime Minister give to the greater number of people in Northern Ireland an assurance that the envoy from President Clinton to which he has agreed will not hold talks with the IRA, Sinn Fein or any other terrorist organisation?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman had better wait and see what announcement is made about the fact finder who I believe may come from the United States to Northern Ireland. Many distinguished people from the United States have been there in the past. Many of them have gone back with great enthusiasm for the changes that they have found in Northern Ireland and the great desire among the people of Northern Ireland for a lasting peace.

Q2. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pike: After 14 years of Tory government, the unemployed and low paid in my constituency are sick of hearing the Prime Minister saying why we cannot have the social chapter in Britain. Can he tell the people of Britain why France, Germany and all the other countries in Europe can have the social chapter but Britain cannot? Are we a second-class Britain as a result of 14 years of Tory rule?

The Prime Minister: It is a pity that the hon. Gentleman does not know his own constituency better, for he would know that unemployment there has fallen 16 per cent. since 1987. He may also have noticed the trend in unemployment in France and Germany.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the citizens charter, which very properly enhances the rights of the citizen, should be complemented by a renewed emphasis on the obligations of the citizen, so that we foster and strengthen mutual responsibility in our society? Will he therefore look systematically to identify and eliminate obstacles that at present discourage voluntary work and charitable activity, including aspects of eligibility for both unemployment benefit and invalidity benefit as well as aspects of the council tax and VAT regimes?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we have done a great deal to improve the quantity and quality of voluntary work in this country. I am happy to examine any practical suggestions to improve it even further.

Q3. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Nigel Jones: May I offer the Prime Minister the chance to welcome Chelsea's long-awaited victory last night after a change of manager? Does he now understand why millions of unemployed people in Britain would welcome a change of manager of the economy?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman may have spent some time rehearsing that. It was not time well spent. Perhaps he needs a training course.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Has my right hon. Friend had time to see the recent "Small Business Bulletin" from Barclays bank, which shows that there was a 19 per cent. increase in the number of small businesses in Britain in the last quarter of 1992 as compared with the last quarter of 1991? This is good news—*[Interruption.]* I know that Opposition Members do not want to hear it, but it is good news. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it shows the resilience of the small business sector in Britain? When he next has a word with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will he encourage him to introduce on 16 March a small business-friendly Budget which will help our small businesses?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is entirely right about the importance of the small business sector both to the economy generally and in terms of job creation. I will certainly draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Q4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Skinner: Does not the Prime Minister realise that after 14 years he stands condemned about the seedy state of Britain today? Pensioners have a job to live; they do not have two ha'pennies to rub together. The banks rip off customers. The bosses steal the pension funds. Ministers have their debts paid by the taxpayer. Is not that the reason why the British people understand him less and condemn him more?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman must have been taking lessons from the Liberal spokesman.

Q5. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Duncan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the most effective weapons in the armoury against crime is the right to refer to the Court of Appeal any sentence that may be considered too lenient? Does he also agree that those who voted against that in the House, including the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), have very little right to posture about crime and even less right to parade their self-righteousness up and down the country?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his own point in his own way. The public rightly expect the sentence to fit the crime. The power for the Attorney-General to refer over-lenient sentences to the Court of Appeal is an important weapon in the fight against crime and one which I believe will have the warm support of people right across the country. I hope that the hon. Member for Sedgefield will change his mind. At the moment, his voting record on crime is a worse record than that of an old lag.

Mr. Redmond: Does the Prime Minister intend to keep his election promises?

The Prime Minister: All Governments intend to keep their election promises.

Q7. **Mr. Paice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Paice: Is not it clear that many of the young people who are committing crimes are not unemployed, because they should still be at school? In that regard, may we have a vigorous campaign against truancy, to improve education and to reduce crime?

The Prime Minister: I believe that it is necessary to do that. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it perfectly clear that we need to cut down on truancy and if we are successful in doing that, we are likely to cut down on juvenile crime. That is why in future, against the opposition Labour Members, we propose to include information on truancy rates when we publish how schools are performing. It is vital information for parents and vital information against crime and it would be helpful if the Opposition would support us in that policy.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: Does the Prime Minister agree that the revelation that the Director General of the BBC has been avoiding tax on a massive scale leaves a very nasty taste in the month? Does he further agree that John Birt should pay back to the Inland Revenue all the tax avoided in his period as deputy director general?

The Prime Minister: Although I am familiar with the case to which the hon. Gentleman refers, it is a matter for the Director General of the BBC and the Inland Revenue.

Q8. **Mr. Shepherd:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: Has my right hon. Friend had the opportunity over the weekend to reflect on the revealing remarks of Professor Halsey on the way in which the schools were hijacked in the 1960s and 1970s by the trendy lefties? Is not it clear that now that those pupils who had been hijacked are parents, they are unable to give their families the moral base to know what is right and wrong today? Will he not be deflected from his path?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. I believe that Professor Halsey now speaks for the views of parents, whereas he certainly did not in the 1960s. The view of the overwhelming number of parents is that the fashionable theories of the 1960s did immense damage to the quality of education in this country.

Q9. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Soley: Can the Prime Minister tell me whether it is his policy to achieve full employment?

The Prime Minister: Every Prime Minister wishes to achieve full employment.

Dr. Liam Fox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if discipline is not instilled at home it cannot be reinforced in schools and then enforced in society? Do not the people of this country have a right to expect the courts to be tough on parents who refuse to apply discipline to their children?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. It is necessary to take firm action with that relatively small number of young people who are persistent offenders. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will have something to say about that shortly.

Miss Lestor: Will the Prime Minister take time today to visit one of the nursery schools in my constituency, or in some other constituency, to remind himself that it is 21 years since a previous Tory Government gave a commitment to nursery education for all four-year-olds? Does he agree that that promise, far from being fulfilled, is now rapidly being forgotten? If he is really concerned about family life in this country, he will ensure that deprivation and other family difficulties are identified by having children under expert eyes at a very early age? Does he agree that, by his meanness in nursery education, he is depriving hundreds of young children of educational opportunities and of care and attention?

The Prime Minister: I know that the hon. Lady takes a great interest in this matter. That being the case, she will know that there are more rising fives—four-year-olds—going to school in this country than in any other European country. We have a different pattern of provision, by which our youngsters are brought into school earlier. Notwithstanding that fact, there has been a significant increase in nursery provision.

Juvenile Offending

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the Government's plans for strengthening our response to the problem of juvenile crime.

A comparatively small number of school-age children are responsible for a high proportion of crime, particularly burglary and car crime, in many parts of the country. I spoke last autumn of my concern about the apparent lack of powers for the courts to deal with the worst of these offenders, and I have since repeatedly made it clear that I am preparing proposals to close what I perceive to be a gap in the law. I believe that it is not in the interests of school-age children that they should be left at large in the community if they are out of control, playing truant from school and repeatedly committing criminal acts against the general public.

The Government are determined to continue to strengthen the powers of the courts to deal with persistent offenders. We must also take other mesures to tackle the problem on a broader front.

The courts already have some powers to sentence juvenile offenders to custody, subject to their age and the offence of which they have been convicted. They also have powers to order them to be supervised in the community with a wide range of additional requirements, some of which involve extensive restrictions on their liberty. Those powers are necessary and sensible for the great majority of juvenile offenders, but I have decided that they are insufficient to deal effectively with that comparatively small group of very persistent juvenile offenders whose repeated offending makes them a menace to the community.

The courts will be provided with a new sentence, which for the present I am calling a secure training order. The order will be available for 12 to 15-year-olds who have been convicted of three imprisonable offences and have proved unwilling or unable to comply with the requirements of supervision in the community while on remand or under sentence. A court would be empowered to impose such a sentence only when it was satisfied that such an order was necessary to protect the public from further offending by that juvenile and when a place in a suitable facility was available. Before making an order, the court would be required to take account of a pre-sentence report. The order might last for up to two years.

The challenge for the new secure training centres will be to provide high standards of care and discipline and opportunities for the juveniles in their care to develop as individuals. Regimes in the new training centres will embrace education and training provided in ways that tackle the individual's offending behaviour. After release from the secure training centre, the order will ensure that the juvenile remains under close supervision unless and until his behaviour has altered and those responsible can be confident that he is no longer a threat to society.

It is absolutely imperative that the supervision in the community be rigorous, consistent and firmly delivered. For those persistent offenders discharged from the new training centres, supervision in the community must build on the work done inside the centres themselves.

National standards are required in this area. My Department and the Department of Health, together with the Welsh Office, last year jointly issued "National Standards for the Supervision of Offenders in the Community". These standards will need to be supplemented to ensure the effective post-release supervision of 12 to 15-year-olds. Work on this will proceed as a matter of urgency.

The secure training orders will be different from anything that has ever been provided before. I envisage that the centres will be provided through agreements with suitable organisations. They may come from the public, voluntary or private sectors, provided that they can demonstrate the ability to meet the standards we shall be setting and to give value for money. Central Government will act as the purchaser of this provision.

To enable the private and voluntary sectors to provide secure accommodation, my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of States for Health and for Wales will amend the present regulations under the Children Act 1989.

The care and social work activities of the centres will be inspected by the social services inspectorate, and their educational provision by inspectors of education.

The Government will also be considering whether the existing powers of courts in sentencing juvenile offenders should, in some cases, include a power to require placement in secure accommodation.

The Government will bring forward legislative proposals to give the courts new powers at the first opportunity.

In working up detailed plans to implement our proposals, we will be having discussions with a wide range of agencies and institutions which may be capable of providing the new centres. Provision will be made for the cost of the new arrangements in the course of the public expenditure planning exercise which is now under way.

In recent years, local authority social services, the probation service and many voluntary organisations have shown that sensible and constructive schemes for supervising young offenders in the community can be successful in preventing crime and diverting young people from the penal system. It is of course important that that policy should continue, and that parents should be involved in the responsibility for the upbringing and behaviour of their children. The existing policy will be strengthened by the measures which my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Health will also take in their respective fields.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health will be reminding social services that their responsibilities for young people who offend, and those on the brink of offending, should stress control as well as care. There should be no soft options.

My right hon. Friend will shortly issue guidance on the control regimes in secure and other forms of children's residential accommodation. That guidance will take account of the lessons learned in protecting children from abuse, such as in the pindown regime. It will also address the serious concern that staff must be able to exercise proper authority over the children in children's homes. They need sanctions if children misbehave. They should also have the necessary powers to prevent children who are detained by order of the courts from running away.

My right hon. Friend will also ensure that social services departments take a consistent approach towards the control of juvenile offenders. There must be a joint approach with the education authorities, the police and probation service and other agencies. My right hon.

Friend the Secretary of State for Education will also be taking measures in support of our general strategy for tackling the problems of juvenile offenders.

Schools must prove effective in instilling discipline through adherence to civilised values and by encouraging and supporting respect for other people and their property. From the earliest possible age, schools, supported by parents, must sharply discourage behaviour which may lead to a life of crime. There is no longer any place in our schools for the discredited philosophy of allowing children to develop in their own way, regardless of right or wrong. Schools must promulgate the values we as a society want to pass on to the next generation.

The national curriculum requires schools to prepare all pupils

"for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life."

The newly independent office for standards in education will be introducing a much more rigorous inspection regime, which will include explicit reporting on behaviour and discipline in schools and on how the school functions.

Action must also be taken to ensure that pupils do attend school. My right hon. Friend now requires schools to keep proper records of truancy. Parents have to be told when their children do not turn up. From next autumn, school performance tables will have to show how well they are doing in making truancy a problem of the past.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why not start here?

Mr. Clarke: I wish some people would play truant more often.

The attack on truancy must come from the Government and from parents. The Government have established a £10 million programme to help schools in 74 authorities to get to grips with the problem. Parents must get their children to school on time and make it clear that they must stay there.

Disruptive pupils must be dealt with more effectively. Significant numbers of children behave so disruptively that schools have had to exclude them. So often, of course, disruptive behaviour, if left unchecked, leads on to offending.

I am able to announce today that, following extensive consultation, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education proposes to bring proposals before Parliament to place local education authorities under a new statutory duty. They will be required to develop comprehensive plans to educate pupils who are not attending school. The aim will be to provide courses tailored to the needs of the individual to prepare excluded pupils for re-entry into school.

I do not lightly commend to this House proposals which, in part, have the serious effect of depriving children of their liberty and removing them from their families. The Government, as I have shown, will continue to support proved and effective ways of dealing with children of this age without resort to custody in all cases where non-custodial measures have a reasonable chance of succeeding. Many first offenders will continue to receive a formal caution from the police, but we will shortly be strengthening our guidance to the police about the criteria for cautioning, including a warning about excessive and repeated use of cautioning in cases where it will plainly be ineffective.

The range of measures I have outlined today is designed to deal more effectively with juveniles on the fringes of criminality, as well as the hard-core offenders who have shown that they cannot or will not respond constructively to supervision in the community. These measures are urgently needed to deal with this problem, and I am confident that the House will support them.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): We welcome at least the recognition that we have been pressing upon the right hon. and learned Gentleman for months that, after 14 years, it is time that the Government took responsibility for the situation. Does he understand that the protection that we require is not just against the menace of persistent juvenile offences, but against all types of criminal offences, which have more than doubled under this Government in the past 14 years?

Coming to the central proposal, we agree that the stress should be on care and education and training in secure accommodation. The Secretary of State believes that that accommodation is best provided in entirely new institutions. We believe that it is best provided by building on the secure accommodation already available at the local level. I will put our case for this and ask him to answer three specific points.

First, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm that under his proposals not one of these places will be in operation until 1995 or 1996 at the earliest? I remind the House that two years ago a Home Office Minister promised 65 extra places of secure accommodation, and not one has yet been built. We have learnt today —perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman will confirm this—that not one has even had the capital funding for it accepted. Does he not understand that it is now that people require action against the rising tide of crime?

Secondly, on the issue of standards, I do not know whether the Secretary of State is aware that the Home Office has just filed evidence with the Home Affairs Select Committee to the effect that local secure accommodation is of a higher standard and leads to less reoffending than is the case with young offenders' institutions. Does he or does he not accept that?

Thirdly, will the Secretary of State listen to the universal advice that it is far preferable to isolate young offenders from their peer group and work with them to lead them to face their responsibilities than to put them in the company of 40 or 50 other persistent young offenders? What we need, in other words, is schools of responsibility, not colleges of crime.

I believe that many people will be surprised at the very narrow nature of the statement. Where, for example, is the action on support and help to make cautioning more effective, as the Association of Chief Police Officers has asked? Where is the review of section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, which is causing confusion in our courts? Where is the guarantee that early intervention on young offenders, which has been proved to work, will be available in all parts of the country, because it is not available at the moment? Given that there is a conviction or caution for only one in 25 crimes, where is the national strategy for crime prevention that is absolutely essential? Above all, where is the acceptance that we do not have to choose —as the Prime Minister says—between condemning crime and understanding it, but that we should both condemn crime and try to understand its underlying causes?

[Mr. Tony Blair]

Is not part of that understanding stopping other Government Departments from doing the very things that undermine the fight against crime? Will the Home Secretary today commit the Government to reversing the policies which have resulted in 75 per cent. of youth services facing cuts this year; which have destroyed more than 100,000 training places for the young and unemployed; which have shut drug projects and closed residential homes for young people; and which have reduced the number of education welfare officers dealing with truancy?

On the Secretary of State's extraordinary statement about truancy, can he explain why he has come forward with the proposals now when the Elton report recommended more than three years ago that the number of education welfare officers should be increased to one for every 2,500 pupils? Can he confirm, in consultation with his colleague if necessary, that today there is only one to every 6,000 as a result of the cuts?

If we are to understand the problems, would not it be sensible to understand the effect of withdrawing benefit from 16 and 17-year-olds and driving them on to the streets? Does he therefore agree categorically that of course there is never any excuse for crime and that those who commit crimes must face justice, but that if children grow up in a world without hope or opportunity, with poor education or housing, with no prospect of work or training, with no stake in the society that demands respect from them, is it not common sense that crime is more likely to breed in such conditions?

Will the Home Secretary understand that we require not a belated response to headlines that damage the Government, but a coherent and thought-out policy to tackle crime and its causes, as they threaten the nation, so that people in our communities can live in their homes and walk the streets of our country free from fear and the threat of crime as they used to be able to do?

Mr. Clarke: I shall not join in too many exchanges about who has been thinking about the problem for months. The Government can demonstrate that not only have we been speaking about it for months, but that three Departments of State have prepared today's proposals, which cover a range of problems—persistent juvenile offenders, absence from school and the regime that needs to be applied by social services departments which have children in their care.

If the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) thinks that we are moving closer together on such matters, the proof will come when we witness his reaction to our solid proposals. He began by suggesting that we should build on the secure accommodation that we already have, and that is a good starting point. Local authorities can provide secure accommodation for children as long as they act within the criteria of the Children Act 1989 and can comply with our proposals in the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The Opposition were somewhat resistant to both Acts.

For philosophical reasons, most local authorities are reluctant to provide secure accommodation for juveniles and I hope that the hon. Member for Sedgefield and his team will use their influence to get rid of that reluctance. I hope that he will welcome the fact that when courts impose supervision orders, as they now do, the Government propose to go beyond the Criminal Justice Act to enable the courts to make it a condition that the person placed under supervision should be held in secure accommodation by a local authority, which will have to provide such accommodation if it does not already have it.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield says that we committed ourselves to 65 specific places. He probably knows that we did so for a particular reason—to replace the remanding to gaol of 15 to 16-year-olds. We have made the capital money available. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has been discussing it with local authorities and it has been difficult to persuade them to take the money for providing secure accommodation. *[Interruption.]* I am glad that some sinners have come home to repent; I am glad that we are making progress. My right hon. Friend is well on course to providing those places by the target date of 1995. I hope that the Opposition will urge reluctant Labour authorities to work with us and take the capital money that we now have available.

Those two issues have led to the continued uncertainty of the hon. Member for Sedgefield on two points. I hope that we can still persuade him to follow up his recent rhetoric with support for our proposals. First, the hon. Gentleman will not say whether the courts should have the power to impose sentences on persistent juvenile offenders which require them to be sent to secure accommodation. For so long as the courts lack that power, they lack the ability to protect the public.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman cannot decide whether he is in favour of the institutions of the kind that I have described. One moment he welcomes them, saying that we have been laggardly, the next minute he compares them with young offenders' institutions, which deal with older and more hardened delinquents. He has also suggested that we should not put all the offenders together because that would create a university of crime. There is a gap in the law, however, because currently the courts do not have adequate powers to deal with the persistent juvenile offender. The institutions do not exist to which those people can be sent to be looked after better, educated and trained and where their offending behaviour can be tackled. The message in the hon. Gentleman's speeches is obscure, and I am not sure whether he has taken on those points.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to truancy. We have been acting on that for some time, going on from the recommendations in the Elton report. Some authorities take the problem more seriously than others. We are now requiring that schools should produce, for the first time, school-by-school figures on truancy levels. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is about to produce performance tables that will compare school by school, a concept resisted bitterly by the Labour party when we proposed it. I have just announced a package of measures, including a £10 million programme, to tackle truancy, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is fully prepared to tackle truancy in our schools.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield also referred to crime prevention programmes, but their scope goes well beyond juvenile offenders. We have developed a system to encourage crime prevention that includes the safer-city project, the neighbourhood watch scheme, and other crime prevention programmes such as car crime prevention year, which ran in 1992, and other operational activities

undertaken by the police to reduce burglary and car theft in target areas. We will continue to launch such programmes.

It is right to comment on those problems in a society that provides a breeding ground for crime. It is also right to comment on the conditions in some of our cities, which the Government have been tackling for many years. Our proposals for city challenge and the inner-city task force are far in advance of anything that the Opposition have suggested. However, those projects cannot be used as an alternative to tackling crime. If we are agreed on the rhetoric and we are close to agreeing on the analysis of the problem, the Opposition should recognise that the Government have brought forward a solid body of proposals. The hon. Member for Sedgefield has no proposals of his own. He cannot yet make up his mind whether he will support that which we have put forward, but I am sure that the House will.

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): Does the Home Secretary accept that his proposals today to deal with persistent offenders between the ages of 12 and 15 and the other comprehensive measures that he has introduced will be widely welcomed in the country? Does he also accept that, if a boy is a persistent offender by the age of 12, his slide into delinquency will probably have happened between the ages of 5 and 10, which is below the age of criminal responsibility?

As a former Education Secretary, does my right hon. and learned Friend appreciate that powers exist in the Education Acts to ensure that disruptive and emotionally disturbed children are sent to special schools and taken out of mainstream education? Will he ensure that the supply and quality of those schools is improved?

Mr. Clarke: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has measures to tackle truancy and disruptive pupils of every age. My right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) is right to say that powers already exist to make provision for particularly disruptive pupils, even of a very young age. We will certainly remind local authorities, education authorities and school governing bodies of those powers. My right hon. Friend also says that there are people out in the field with considerable expertise and skill in dealing with difficult, disturbed and disruptive children. We need to draw on such expertise to provide facilities for older children.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the Home Secretary accept that, in proposing the new secure training centres for the young, he is adding to a range of options that is too limited for the magistrates and those with sentencing responsibilities? By his own admission, he is dealing with a minor part of the problem of young offending, which has become clearer and clearer as we have had 14 years of Conservative administration and a whirligig of Home Secretaries revolving their particular nostrums to tackle the problem. Does the Home Secretary also accept that, at a time when a royal commission is sitting on the criminal justice system, it would be appropriate to look at the need to establish a separate youth justice system with courts—perhaps parallel to the system in Scotland—gearing their responses to young offending in a more apt way?

Mr. Clarke: The Government have introduced youth courts. Throughout their period of office they have progressively introduced a range of powers and disposals for the courts that are effective for the vast majority of juvenile offenders. Only recently, when we took the Criminal Justice Act 1991 through the House, we gave magistrates more powers than they had previously enjoyed to impose conditions on the supervision orders that they could make for juvenile offenders. Today, I have announced that we are considering giving magistrates additional powers to make stronger conditions on the supervision orders to require that the local authority supervises the child in secure accommodation. We shall also provide an entirely new disposal for the hard core of persistent offenders for whom there are currently no adequate provisions.

I do not believe that our proposals are an ad hoc search for solutions. They constitute a well-balanced package of measures to give the youth courts, which the Government have established, the range of powers which they need and which they tell us they require.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that experienced junior, and even infant, teachers are quite capable of saying at a very early age which children are liable to grow up to be criminals? Does he agree that it is not just a matter of truancy? Schools need to return to the understanding that it is essential to discipline a child to live peaceably in a disciplined world. The constant efforts of the Labour party to allow teachers fewer and fewer disciplinary powers are dangerous.

Mr. Clarke: I agree strongly with my hon. Friend. As far as it was relevant to do so, I mentioned in my statement the need for schools to accept responsibility for maintaining a properly disciplined and structured atmosphere in which to teach the national curriculum and also introduce children to the values that they need in a society such as ours. The direction of our education reforms underlines that need. We are steadily restoring a more structured atmosphere in our schools and becoming clearer about what schools should be teaching. The national curriculum includes the references that I made to general teaching of the standards required for life in a civilised society. The fact that we are giving more power to parents to influence what goes on in schools will also underline our policy.

We are addressing precisely the problems about which my hon. Friend was worried. I agree that it is extremely important to consider the problem as a whole. The initial causes of criminality are just as important as the disposals that the court can make in relation to the hard-core offenders with whom we have failed.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): Does the Home Secretary recognise that his statement addresses only one small part of the overall problem? Does he accept that there need to be changes to the criminal justice system to make it far more effective, which it clearly is not at present? In particular, will he take urgent action to repeal section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 so that previous convictions can be taken into account when an offender is being sentenced? After 14 years of Conservative Government and a crisis of confidence, why will not the main proposals in his statement take effect for another two to three years?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments about the Criminal Justice Act 1991. It came into effect only last October, so we have barely five months' experience of its operation. That legislation was taken through Parliament at the request of the courts and was supported by both sides of the House. It makes provision for the previous convictions of offenders to be taken into account in certain circumstances. There is now widespread dissatisfaction with the 1991 Act, and I am quite prepared to re-examine it—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] However, after only five months' experience of a provision that I think every right hon. and hon. Member supported only 12 months ago, we need a little time to make sure that everyone has that Act's provisions working as they were intended to work before embarking on any possible changes.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): As a secure training order will be made only after a juvenile has been convicted of three imprisonable offences, and as my right hon. and learned Friend is to strengthen the police cautioning criteria, will he take account of the widespread disillusionment among the magistracy, Members of Parliament and everybody in public life with the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and allow courts to be told about similar offences?

Can my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House how it is proposed that

"Schools must prove effective in instilling discipline through adherence to civilised values"?

Do the Government propose to bring back corporal punishment?

Mr. Clarke: I have already described the range of offences that we will be covering, and they do not relate only to persistent juvenile offenders. We will strengthen the guidance on cautioning to make sure that persistent use of cautioning is not resorted to where it is plainly ineffective. The police can then take children before the youth court, and the Criminal Justice Act 1991 enables for the first time the parents of children to be brought before the court and to be bound over to be responsible for the good behaviour of their children. In certain circumstances, the parents can be required to pay their children's fines. Supervision orders are available, which are the next appropriate step with a juvenile who is going out of control.

The 1991 Act extended the range of conditions that justices can impose on supervision orders. We are now proposing to go a step further and are considering giving justices the power to make a supervision order subject to a condition that the child lives in secure accommodation. On top of that, we are introducing a new power to allow a sentence to be imposed on persistent offenders, sending them, under a secure training order, to one of the new secure training centres. There is no need for the police and magistrates to be disillusioned. The 1991 Act—which is certainly worth reviewing but is being too widely attacked—strengthens the powers of the youth courts in a number of key ways.

The Government have been working for months—long before the recent publicity—on ways of strengthening the powers of the courts yet further. It is important to back up the work of the police and of the schools—and it is important to back up the work that should be done by all responsible parents if juvenile crime in this country is to be brought down to a tolerable level.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): The Home Secretary was singularly unprepared to answer the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), but will he comment on a letter that I received today from a constituent who is on the management committee of the Young Lewisham project? That project concerns itself specifically with dealing with young people before they become persistent offenders. The letter states:

"I find it at least ironic and at worst callously indifferent to hear members of the Government and Ministers bemoaning the lack of social responsibility among young people and expressing concerns about juvenile crime, when the consequence of their policies on local government spending is that something as worth while as the Young Lewisham project is forced to close."

Will the Home Secretary ask his Cabinet colleagues to ensure that funding is available for ventures such as the Young Lewisham project? Will he also say when the measures that he has announced will be implemented?

Mr. Clarke: We have greatly expanded the finance available to social services departments, the police and the criminal justice system over the past 12 or 13 years. We continue to direct ourselves to how those resources can best be used. In the case of voluntary bodies supported by local authorities, provision is ultimately local, and must be determined by local authorities—along with their voluntary bodies—in the light of their own priorities, although the Government provide the funds.

How far and how rapidly we progress with the ideas that I have announced today will depend on the availability of parliamentary time, and on the progress of the discussions that I now propose to have about the development of the regime with all those who have expertise in the field. We need to define the cost of providing the necessary centres. We have every intention of pressing on as quickly as possible. I am glad to say that the Government identified the problem at an early stage, and we intend to introduce the new provisions as fast as is reasonably possible.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the frustration felt by the magistracy and the police about the present state of the law, which states that a child under the age of 10 is incapable of a criminal act, and that, in the case of a child aged between 10 and 14, the onus is on the prosecution to prove that the child knew it was doing something criminal? Is there not an argument for stating—in the light of common knowledge of children and the way in which they mature nowadays—that the court should make its own judgment about whether a child knew that it was performing a criminal act, and should deal with that child accordingly?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is right about the way in which children over 10 are dealt with. I have no doubt that there has been controversy for generations, in the House and elsewhere, about the age of criminal responsibility. Plainly, there comes a point at which a child cannot be placed before a court: we would not put before a court a seven-year-old awaiting sentence for a criminal act. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) has reminded us, however, that does not mean that there is nothing that anyone can do about disruptive children.

It may not be suitable to put before a court a seven-year-old who has carried out violent, dangerous or

dishonest acts, thus beginning his criminal career and the list of his criminal convictions. Nevertheless, steps must be taken, by the education authority or, if necessary, the social services department, to deal with the disruptive behaviour of that child. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) that the earlier such potentially criminal behaviour is addressed, the better it may be for society as a whole.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The Home Secretary has placed a great onus on parents and teachers. Does he accept, however, that contradictory and confusing messages are sent to many homes because of the high level of television violence and the easy availability of snuff videos and video nasties, as well as the powerful effect of drugs as a pressure for crime?

Does the Home Secretary recognise that much of the problem is due to the fact that many of the children involved come from broken and unloving homes, where there are no fathers, where brothers and sisters often have multiple partners and where the steadying influence of grandparents does not exist? Does he accept that, although hon. Members on both sides of the House wholeheartedly support his call for children to be able to choose between right and wrong, that is virtually impossible while parents and teachers have to struggle with their current dilemma? They tell a child, "Thou shalt not kill, mug, maim, burgle or destroy"; at the same time, those actions feature, dressed up as entertainment, on virtually every televison programme that that child sees at home.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with some of what the hon. Gentleman has said about the material to which children are frequently exposed on television, in videos and elsewhere. It is less easy to come up with remedies on which the House can agree, but the House—and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage—should continue to address the problem.

I agree strongly with what the hon. Gentleman said about drugs. We are seeking to develop yet stronger policies to deal with the abuse of drugs. It is one of the causes of crime that society has the ability to control, as long as we back up the police, the voluntary agencies and every other agency to try to contain it.

As for the hon. Gentleman's point about support and affection in the home, obviously the best defence for a child is a good, supportive home where that child is given affection, and is also taught to distinguish between right and wrong. The new centres that I propose for persistent juvenile offenders will be secure accommodation: the offenders will be locked up and prevented from escaping. They will be made to go through the process of education that they need at that age, and they will be trained; but I suspect that many will also receive more care, affection and personal attention than they received in their own homes. That is one of the many gaps that we shall fill when imposing a sentence that will usually be necessary in the offenders' interest, just as much as in the interest of the public.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's important statement. May I urge him not to delay the implementation of these necessary measures? Will he call on local authorities to use their existing powers much more effectively? Was it not noticeable that the Opposition spokesman had little to say about the many failures of local authorities in that respect?

Mr. Clarke: I shall be introducing legislation as soon as is reasonably possible, although, at the moment, the parliamentary timetable is peculiarly difficult to anticipate. However, this is an urgent priority. I have already said that we shall be making the necessary financial provision in this year's public expenditure round and we are now moving on to the detailed planning with the would-be providers of the centres that we require. I certainly accept my hon. Friend's strictures on the urgency of putting the measures in place.

I also agree with what he said about some local authorities. In some parts of the country there is a dearth of secure accommodation for juveniles, sometimes because the local authority social services department has a philosophical objection to providing it. If the climate of public opinion is changing generally, it should also change among such local authorities. If there has been a conversion among our opponents, that should help to produce a similar conversion by local government.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am bringing questions on the statement to a close. The guillotine on the Education Bill falls in less than two hours, and we have private Members' business before that.

Points of Order

4.12 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance about asking the Secretary of State for Health to tell the House this afternoon whether it is true that she is about to announce a dramatic increase in prescription charges, which will constitute a rise of 2,000 per cent. since the Government said in 1979 that prescription charges would remain at 20p. She is prepared to tax the sick, not the rich——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now making a speech. I understood his point of order about the Secretary of State for Health, but I have not been informed that she wishes to make a statement to the House. We shall now proceed with today's business.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): On a point of order relating to the Education Bill, Madam Speaker. I wish to complain about the intolerably short time that we have had to examine new clause 22. Hon. Members such as myself who live in the north and who go home to their constituencies at the weekend have not been allowed time to table an effective amendment.

Madam Speaker: That is very much a matter for the Government. It is not a point of order for me. I dealt with the amendments in good time and under the normal procedure.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I in no way seek to call into question what happened on the statement, Madam Speaker, but may I draw your attention to the fact that members of the two Front Benches took well over half of the 40 minutes we had for questions, leaving insufficient time for Back Benchers such as myself, whose constituencies suffer from these problems, to raise specific constituency issues? I realise the difficulty that you faced today, but could you perhaps bring pressure to bear indirectly on members of the Front Benches to make them more aware of Back Benchers' problems in future and perhaps arrange for an urgent debate through the Leader of the House?

Madam Speaker: I am delighted to have the hon. Gentleman's support. I face such problems every day. I can assure him that every time there is a statement in the House I make a note of how long the members of the two Front Benches take and that I deal with the situation in the best way that I can. Today I have to strike a balance because of the guillotine on the Education Bill. I know that the hon. Gentleman and the House understand that.

BILLS PRESENTED

Carrying of Knives etc. (Scotland)

Mr. Phil Gallie, supported by Mr. Raymond S. Robertson, Mr. Bill Walker, Mr. George Kynoch, Mr. Jim Wallace, Mrs Margaret Ewing, Dr. Norman A. Godman and Mr. Robert Hughes, presented a Bill to provide, as respects Scotland, for it to be an offence to have in a public place an article with a blade or point; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 March, and to be printed. [Bill 147.]

Education (City Technology Colleges Appeals Procedure)

Mr. Simon Hughes presented a Bill to allow for a right of appeal by pupils or parents refused admission to a City Technology College: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 12 March, and to be printed. [Bill 148.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Official Secrets

That the draft Official Secrets Act 1989 (Prescription) (Amendment) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Question agreed to.

Local Government (Amendment)

4.16 pm

Mr. Neil Gerrard (Walthamstow): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make further provision as to the functions of local authorities in relation to ethnic minorities; to amend section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to permit grants to be made to local authorities making special provisions in exercising their functions, in consequence of the presence within their areas of substantial numbers of people from ethnic minority communities; and for connected purposes.

Mr. Gerrard: The purpose of the Bill is simply to make an amendment to section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966. That section enables the Home Secretary to make grants to local authorities to meet the needs of some ethnic minority communities within their areas. The system is that the Home Secretary provides 75 per cent. of the funding through grants, and the local authority matches that with 25 per cent. In the current year, about £129 million is being spent in this way and is funding the equivalent of about 10,000 full-time staff.

The problem with section 11 is the definition within it. At present it reads that the Home Secretary can make the grants to local authorities in consequence of the presence within their areas of substantial numbers of immigrants from the Commonwealth. Although that wording may have been perfectly appropriate in 1966, now that we have significant numbers of refugees and asylum seekers not from the Commonwealth living in many local authority areas, it is not appropriate any more.

There are some other problems with section 11 which my Bill will not address. The problem of resources is one. The Government impose an annual cash limit and have just announced reductions over the next three years. It is somewhat ironic that, in the letter which they wrote to local authorities saying that they were firmly committed to the reduction of racial disadvantage, the Government announced cuts in this provision.

Also section 11 does not address short-term costs. Under my Bill grant could be paid to help local authorities to meet the special needs of refugees, but from time to time local authorities have to cope with sudden arrivals of significant numbers of people. That happened in the past with Kurdish refugees and more recently with refugees from eastern Europe.

It would be inappropriate to suggest that section 11 was the only way to address those problems, but it has been accepted for some time that section 11 needs amendment. The Government carried out their own review in 1988 and came to that conclusion, suggesting that there was need to widen the definition and that there should be changes in the requirement of substantial numbers, and that section 11 grant should be payable to other service providers and to the voluntary sector, although local authorities would continue to have an important role in co-ordination.

Since that review there have been some changes, but most of what was happening in 1988 is still happening. Almost 90 per cent. of section 11 funding goes to education. That reflects historic developments but also to some extent the cash limiting of the past two or three years which has prevented new projects from getting off the ground. So that the bulk of the money is going on projects such as English for speakers of other languages, careers education and adult basic literacy. But there are other services that are supporting projects such as helping elderly people through the social services, business development advice, challenging racial harassment, translation and the like.

The difficulty is that the changing patterns of need and the need to deal with non-Commonwealth communities cannot be legitimately recognised within those projects. Some London boroughs will give estimates of the cost of providing services. Enfield and Ealing estimate that they have within their areas about 2,500 refugee children who require intensive language teaching. While it may not necessarily be appropriate for all that they need to be met under section 11, and while such need should certainly be recognised in standard spending assessments, section 11 projects should be able to address it.

The present situation is nonsensical in that a class of children, for example, could consist half of Turkish Cypriots and half of Turks. Half the class could be taught through a section 11 project and the other half could not, although clearly the needs would be similar. Over the past 15 years substantial numbers of people have arrived from non-Commonwealth countries—from Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Latin America and, more recently, from eastern Europe. Many of those people have been granted settlement and have obvious needs. They require assistance but they cannot be helped under section 11. There is no doubt that the present arrangements make for inefficient administrative systems. For example, if an authority provides English classes it makes administrative and educational sense for them to be open to non-English speakers from any community rather than being restricted to people from new Commonwealth communities.

Some issues raised by the Home Office review, such as the use of other agencies and, to some degree, the use of the voluntary sector, have been dealt with through the ethnic minorities grants which were introduced in 1991 and are funded through training and enterprise councils. In setting up that system the Home Office said that it was a means by which grant could be opened up to new areas of ethnic minority need and to the voluntary sector, so that the needs of all ethnic minorities, without regard to origin, could be considered. It is a pity that so far the Home Office has found only £4 million a year to distribute in ethnic minorities grant. In addition, local authorities have been encouraged to base projects in the voluntary sector. Indeed, they are required to identify section 11 projects for grant bids.

Everyone involved with section 11 now recognises that it needs amending. The Home Office recognises that, too. Ideally, the Home Office should have dealt with the matter after its review, with new legislation covering all the aspects. Instead the matter has been addressed in a piecemeal way. That is not ideal, but it is a precedent that the Government have already set. After listening to statements such as that which we heard earlier, and thinking about the pressures on parliamentary time, I think it unlikely that the Government will find time for a Bill on the subject. In the meantime, therefore, my Bill is needed to help local authorities to target resources efficiently and effectively and to help them reflect the changing needs within their areas.

I finish by quoting the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Fareham (Mr. Lloyd), whom I am glad to see sitting on the Government Front Bench now. Last year the hon. Gentleman wrote to the Refugee Council in response to its enquiry about the scope for section 11, saying that he recognised its concern

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"that the majority of refugees are not able to benefit from support under this provision because they do not come from the New Commonwealth . . . We accept that there is a need to bring forward legislation and when there is a suitable opportunity we intend to extend the scope of the grant beyond New Commonwealth ethnic minorities to whom, for historical reasons, it is restricted at present."

The Minister now has an opportunity to support my Bill and to do what the Home Office has been saying for some time that it wants to do.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Neil Gerrard, Mrs. Barbara Roche, Mr. David Lidington, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. Jeremy Corbyn, Mr. Max Madden, Mr. Mike Watson, Mr. Harry Cohen, Mr. Stephen Byers and Mr. Bernie Grant.

Local Government (Amendment)

Mr. Neil Gerrard accordingly presented a Bill to make further provision as to the functions of local authorities in relation to ethnic minorities; to amend section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 to permit grants to be made to local authorities making special provisions in exercising their functions, in consequence of the presence within their areas of substantial numbers of people from ethnic minority communities; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 26 March, and to be printed. [Bill 149.]

Education Bill (Allocation of Time)

Resolved,

That the Report [11th February] from the Business Committee be now considered.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Report considered accordingly.

Question, That this House doth agree with the Committee in its resolution, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 80 (Business Committee) and agreed to.*

Following is the report of the Business Committee:

(1) The order in which proceedings on consideration are taken shall be new Clauses; Amendments to Clauses Nos. 1 and 2, Schedule No. 1, Clauses Nos. 3 to 7, Schedule No. 2, Clauses Nos. 8 to 29, Schedule No. 4, Clauses Nos. 30 to 44, Schedule No. 3, Clauses Nos. 45 to 49, Schedules Nos. 5 and 6, Clauses Nos. 50 to 53, Schedule No. 7, Clauses Nos. 54 to 154, Schedule No. 8, Clauses No. 155, Schedule No. 9, Clauses Nos. 156 to 168, Schedule No. 10, Clauses Nos. 169 to 201, Schedule No. 11, Clauses Nos. 202 to 219, Schedule No. 12, Clauses Nos. 220 to 222, Schedule No. 13, Clauses Nos. 223 to 231, Schedule No. 14, Clauses Nos. 232 to 237, Schedule No. 15, Clauses Nos. 238 to 268 and Schedules Nos. 16 to 18; and new Schedules;

(2) The allotted days which under the Order of 15th December are given to the proceedings on consideration and Third Reading shall be allotted in the manner shown in the Table set out below and, subject to the provisions of that Order, each part of the proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the third column of that Table.

TABLE

Allotted day	*Proceedings*	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
First day	Government new Clauses	6 p.m.
	Remaining new Clauses	8 p.m.
	Amendments up to the end of Clause No. 143	10 p.m.
	Amendments up to the end of Clause No. 195	midnight
Second day	Amendments up to the end of Schedule No. 12	5 p.m.
	Amendments up to the end of Clause No. 256	6.30 p.m.
	Amendments to Clause No. 257	8 p.m.
	Remaining proceedings on consideration	9 p.m.
	Third Reading	10 p.m.

Orders of the Day

Education Bill

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It concerns the selection of amendments for today's debate. Under the selection on clause 156, amendment No. 97 has been selected. That amendment directs that the subsection of the clause should be left out and that subsections (2) and (3) should be inserted. Those subsections include the provisions in amendment No. 98, but amendment No. 98 has not been selected, so amendment No. 97 does not make any sense in its present form.

Madam Speaker: If the hon. Gentleman had given me a little notice, I might have been able to turn all the pages more rapidly. As all the amendment and page numbers were thrown at me, may I examine the matter and report back to him?

New clause 22

GENERAL DUTY OF SECRETARY OF STATE

'.—(1) The Secretary of State shall promote the education of the people of England and Wales.

(2) In particular he shall exercise for that purpose his powers in respect of those bodies in receipt of public funds which—

(a) carry responsibility for securing that the required provision for education is made in, or in any area of, England or Wales, or

(b) conduct educational institutions in England and Wales.

(3) He shall, in the case of his powers to regulate the provision made in educational institutions in England and Wales, exercise his powers with a view, among other things, to improving standards, encouraging diversity and increasing opportunities for choice.'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.28 pm

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it might be convenient to take the following: amendment (b) to the new clause, at end insert—

'(4) He shall exercise his powers in respect of the distribution of public funds to ensure that they are distributed equitably.'.

Government amendments Nos. 81 and 82.

Mr. Patten: I am glad to put to the House something which I think will be historically important in educational terms. I am all the more pleased because I presume that it will have the enthusiastic support of Opposition Members. I say that because my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) assures me that the clause responds to the general concerns of both sides of the Standing Committee.

I believe that one of the first people to press for me to move such a new clause was the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). That is exactly what one might expect from such an erudite and far-seeing Member of the House. I hope that I am damaging enough with his general management committee in what I am saying. Of course, his views were——

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Will my right hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Patten: I was just coming to my hon. Friend. I know that he felt exactly the same way. That does not surprise me, because his wisdom and judgment in such matters are unparalleled throughout the House.

Mr. Pawsey: I am not quite sure whether I should have asked my right hon. Friend to give way at that specific time. I was merely going to say that the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) spoke at some length on the matter in Standing Committee. Clearly, there is a general flow of good will across the Chamber on this important clause. I feel it only right that my right hon. Friend should be aware of that current of good will.

Mr. Patten: I wish that there would always be a current of good will from both sides of the House whenever I get to the Dispatch Box.

I know that both sides of the Chamber are realistic about the way in which the educational world has changed beyond the vision set out at the beginning of the 1944 Education Act. I welcome the fact that, even though we may differ on many other points, everyone seems to recognise that the world has moved on in the last half-century. That is not surprising.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): In the current constructive mood of good will, would the Secretary of State care to take on board the 99 positive proposals which we have made but which he has overlooked or the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) is loth to tell him about? The right hon. Gentleman will have overlooked it. I understand that because he did not appear once to listen to the deliberations of the Standing Committee.

Mr. Patten: All those constructive views were listened to carefully, and, with his usual charm, rejected, by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary.

I am indebted to both Conservative and Opposition members of the Committee for their support in the Standing Committee for the move that we are making. The debates, which are there in the Standing Committee *Hansard* for all to see, highlighted the fact that section 1 of the Education Act 1944 refers exclusively to the responsibility of local education authorities alone for the delivery of education services. It is no longer the case that LEAs alone have responsibility for the delivery of education. Things have moved on a great deal in the past half-century.

The thrust of Government policy in recent years has been to change the picture, especially since the landmark Education Reform Act 1988, which will be a monument to the service rendered in this place by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). That Act has helped to transfer power and responsibility to the institutions—the schools and colleges.

The 1988 Act created the initial framework for the transfer of power by requiring schemes of local management for all state schools and colleges of further education, and by giving schools the right to opt out of

[Mr. Patten]

local education authority control. One of the results of that bears repeating, because Opposition Members continue to talk the success story down.

There has been a startlingly successful move towards self-government in both further education and grant-maintained schools. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary and I attended a reception last night to mark the creation of the new further education sector, which will have complete freedom from local authority control after 1 April 1993. We have seen the effects and benefits of increased freedom.

As of today, more than 650 schools have applied for full self-governing, grant-maintained status. As projected in last summer's White Paper, by April 1994 the number of grant-maintained schools could be about 1,500. Of course, by then all LEA schools in Britain will have delegated budgets under the local management of schools scheme. LMS was bitterly fought a few years ago by the Opposition but, curiously enough, it is often used now as a weapon to persuade schools not to become self-governing. Local authorities say, "We will give you 85, 90 or 95 per cent. of the control over your budget."

As Mr. Enoch Powell might have said, it is paradoxical that that which the Labour party used to oppose five years ago it now uses as a weapon to try to stand in the way of Government policy. That attempt will fail, in the same way as opposition to delegated school management failed only five years ago.

Mr. Win Griffiths: A similar statement was made in Committee that we opposed the principle of local management of schools. We did not. We opposed the formula which the then Secretary of State proposed to introduce—especially the running sore of basing the budget on average school salary costs rather than real school salary costs.

Mr. Patten: No one who was in the House in 1987 and 1988, who sat through the many hours of the Committee stage of the Education Reform Bill or who took part in and listened with care and attention to the debates on the Floor of the House could have come away with anything other than the opinion that the Labour party did not wish to see the end of local bureaucratic control.

I welcome the hon. Gentleman's belated conversion. I suppose that it is the beginning of the modernisation of the Labour party's education policy, albeit five years behind the times. After the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) has left her position on the Front Bench to go somewhere else, the next Front-Bench spokesman will be thoroughly in favour of grant-maintained schools, just you wait and see.

The belief in self-government lay at the heart of the White Paper introduced by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and myself, and of the Bill, which has now almost completed its passage through this House. The Bill consolidates the framework laid down in the 1988 Act. That framework provides for more and more schools to achieve self-governing status. But the laws which govern the provision of education must recognise what is happening and the fact that there have been other transfers of powers in the education world.

The then R. A. Butler's 1944 Education Act marked a great leap forward in the development of the education system in this country. I often think that, had the then R. A. Butler, in his scheme in the 1944 Act, had the benefit of the national curriculum and regular testing, the tripartite division of schools that he introduced in that Act might still endure today, because the national curriculum provides equality of opportunity and a minimum entitlement for all our children.

That did not happen, as he did not have a national curriculum or testing, but the Act itself has been on the statute book for half a century, and times have changed. The model of a centrally planned system, from Whitehall to town halls and county halls, is no longer appropriate, with a hierarchy of control from the Secretary of State to the local education authority, and through the local education authority to the school or college. It is certainly not appropriate for the 21st century, as was obvious to some well before the Education Act 1988.

My noted constituent Professor Halsey, fellow of Nuffield College Oxford, was much mentioned during Prime Minister's Question Time, and I have followed his sayings over the years. In a speech as long ago as January 1981, he doubted the wisdom of leaving education in the hands of—I quote directly from *The Guardian*, so it must be true—"professional education officers". He recommended a system whereby every school would receive a direct grant from Whitehall. As Professor Halsey said, "Why not try something revolutionary—local democracy?" That is exactly what we are doing. The Labour party is just 12 or 13 years behind Professor Halsey.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): During the process of the Bill through Committee, Opposition Members were continually talking about our measures being centralising. My right hon. Friend is making it perfectly clear that they do not even begin to understand the purpose of the Bill and Government policy. Will he confirm that our proposals and the Bill move towards local democracy and to the control of education being in the hands of schools, teachers and parents, and are the opposite of centralisation?

Mr. Patten: Some people in the Labour party are now beginning to believe that, in democracies throughout the western world, the move towards giving individuals and communities greater control over their own affairs, be it in schools or the health service, is a model. Words such as "empowerment" and "distribution of power" have been falling from the lips of some of the modernisers in the Labour party.

However, none of those modernisers is represented on the Opposition Front Bench today. The Opposition education team is in the hands of the producer lobbies and one or two trade unions. They should listen to what Professor Halsey said in 1981. I repeat, for the second and last time, my prediction that, by the end of the Parliament, we might well see the Labour party having turned on its head on grant-maintained schools, in the same way as it has done over trust hospitals and the local management of schools. That has been the history of the Labour party since 1979.

Ms. Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): I am extremely concerned that the Secretary of State is not up to date. Perhaps he has not read Professor Halsey's letter in *The Guardian* this morning, in which he fully reaffirms his commitment to comprehensive schools, and states:

"My preferred educational policy is also that of the Labour Party which deplores Conservative privatisation, underfunding and centralised bureaucracy, and which favours comprehensive schools. In short I remain an unrepentant ethical socialist."

Mr. Patten: For some reason, I have not read *The Guardian* this morning. I will do so, but I was reading from what Professor Halsey said 12 years ago. He may well have turned on his head, having been used so much by the Conservative party and the press. I regret the fact that he is now flicking backwards and forwards between one position and another.

Historians and academics, like Professor Halsey, would think ill of Members of Parliament if we failed in our duty to bring the lapsing provisions of the Education Act 1944 up to date, and it is in that spirit that I tabled the new clause. I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will admire its straightforward simplicity. It is deliberately framed in a general form. Without the tedium of a long list, it covers all the relevant institutions and bodies. It also covers the colleges of further education, the Further Education Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council and the universities.

This is a radically different picture from that of half a century ago, when local education authorities ruled all the education waves—not only schools but further education colleges, and subsequently those institutions that became polytechnics, which a few years ago we set free of local authority control and enfranchised as independent universities. One has only to go to an independent grant-maintained school, an independent further education college or an independent university within the state system to see the benefits of independence. Those benefits need to be reflected in this vital clause.

The new clause also emphasises the Government's key educational objectives, which, unfortunately, do not seem to be shared by many Opposition Members. These objectives include improved standards—improved mainly through the encouragement of diversity—and increased choice for pupils and parents.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is this very independence that stimulates vitality and new ideas in heads and teaching staffs, as well as in parents? Responsibility for implementation is what really brings ideas to fruition. In teaching, that is what provides ultimate satisfaction.

Mr. Patten: My hon. Friend was in education for many years before coming to the House. Because of that experience, I respect what he says and always give way to him.

What my hon. Friend has said does not apply just to grant-maintained schools. One now finds 90 per cent. delegation in LEA schools. Many such schools are on the edge of the nest, ready to fly off as fully independent institutions. There is a terrific feeling of zip and vim, and there is much experimentation. I pay tribute to those schools. The modernising tendency that is sweeping the Labour party has yet to reach education.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I approve entirely of the right hon. Gentleman's concern for diversity and choice. In that context, will he look again at what I said in Committee about the possibility of providing state funding for schools whose curricula are different from, but none the less at a deep level compatible with, the national curriculum in terms of both scope and standards?

Does he recognise that such schools have an enormous contribution to make? So long as it can be proved that they have been successful and have reached the same destination by a different route, consideration ought to be given to some means, other than those that I have proposed, of providing state support for them.

Mr. Patten: I recognise the hon. Gentleman's great interest in these issues. I was about to say that he and I have crossed swords, but it would be more correct to say that we have almost crossed the Floor towards each other during Question Time exchanges about special educational needs. I respect his views and am aware of his deep interest in Steiner schools. I respect what that movement does.

However, state funds should be provided for schools that undertake the national curriculum. That is a minimum entitlement of all children in all schools of any sort within the state sector. The grant-maintained schools, county schools and schools in metropolitan areas deliver it. That is the right way forward.

We are always willing to consider applications from schools of all sorts for admission to the state sector, provided there is no surplus of school places in the areas concerned, and provided that the schools teach the national curriculum. Having been made aware of the hon. Gentleman's position, I shall keep an open mind on these issues. However, in the context of this Bill, we cannot go any further down the route that I know the hon. Gentleman wishes us to take.

I have referred to the way in which the system has changed since 1944. This new clause certainly does not sound the death knell for council control of primary and secondary schools. In effect, schemes of delegated management and self-government have almost done that already.

The new clause makes it clear that the role of local education authorities is changing rapidly. So far as some schools stay within the LEAs, these authorities will continue to plan provision in them and service them. The LEAs will also retain certain key strategic responsibilities —most notably in the field of special educational needs. But LEAs will no longer be the sole, and in some cases no longer a substantial, provider of education.

Education authorities are increasingly becoming enablers. They are enabling schools to provide education and are providing some services. The new clause reflects that existing and dynamic state of affairs. It encapsulates the Government's vision of our future education system. It recognises the fact that the system is changing very rapidly, as well as the extent of change since 1944, and I commend it to the House.

4.45 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): I ought to start by welcoming the Secretary of State to the debate on the Bill. Since November we have been discussing it in great detail in Committee. The fact that the Secretary of State never even put his head round the door of the Committee room proves that his interest in the Bill is not exactly commendable.

[Mrs. Ann Taylor]

The Secretary of State did not make any reference to amendment (b), in my name and the names of several of my hon. Friends. That amendment would provide that

"He shall exercise his powers in respect of the distribution of public funds to ensure that they are distributed equitably."

It is surprising that the Secretary of State did not say whether he was prepared to accept our amendment. Obviously, this is an issue with which he does not feel comfortable. Perhaps his remarks a few moments ago explain his problem. He said that schools should receive public money for delivering the national curriculum, yet the Government support the assisted places scheme, by which public money is used to subsidise independent schools that do not provide the national curriculum. Perhaps that is why the Secretary of State was not willing to address the basic principle of equity, which is the foundation of our amendment.

In some respects, the new clause could be seen as harmless. It is a declaratory provision full of rhetoric but without much meaning. It is strange in that it gives the Secretary of State powers, whereas the Act of 1944 imposed duties. If the Secretary of State's role is so critical, he should be seen as undertaking duties rather than exercising powers. One can choose whether to exercise powers.

In any case, I am not happy with the new clause. It is not true that there was Opposition pressure for it. Opposition Members drew attention to the anomaly in the Government's legislation, but that is hardly the equivalent of calling for such a provision. Before the right hon. Gentleman and his right hon. Friends came on the scene, there was a consensus that the Government were responsible for providing the framework of education, while the local authorities administered its delivery in accordance with local circumstances and local decisions, democratically arrived at. That is local accountability—a concept with which the Secretary of State seems to have difficulty in grappling. The Secretary of State's grabbing of specific powers has proceeded apace in recent years.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the Act of 1988, which was introduced by his right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker). Once that power was given to Secretaries of State, they became addicted to acquiring even more power and holding it in their own hands. Even before this Bill was introduced, the Secretary of State had power to appoint to quangos whomever he liked and to seek advice from those agreeing with him, and from no one else. The Secretary of State can decide the content of the curriculum. Indeed, he can announce changes such as the one about which we heard today—that the chairman of the National Curriculum Council and the chairman of the School Examinations and Assessment Council have resigned and a new appointment has been made. It is interesting to note that, when talking about his powers and role, the Secretary of State does not refer to the changes relevant to the Bill that have been made during the discussions on the measure.

Let us not forget that the right hon. Gentleman had, and used, many powers prior to the introduction of the Bill. He had powers over the curriculum, assessment and testing and powers to determine methods and levels of funding, in so far as the Treasury would allow, and over methods of teaching and teacher training. But even that array of powers was not enough for the present Secretary of State, which is why new clauses were introduced at a late stage, well after the guillotine had fallen, without proper time for consultations. Ministers have been panicked into using the measure to prop up some of their failing policies.

For example, the Secretary of State is taking new powers under clause 25 to enable him to declare void a ballot on grant-maintained status, if he thinks that somebody has played a part in influencing the ballot through the provision of information to parents. He will personally make that judgment. He has already introduced a new clause to force the issue of grant-maintained status on to the agenda of every governing body each year. So much for Government claims about trusting the judgment of governors.

Now we have the new clause, the so-called zero clause, which emphasises the role of the individual who holds the Secretary of State's office. But the right hon. Gentleman spent little time on the way in which he wants to repeal section 1 of the Education Act 1944, which he called the bedrock of education for the last 40 years. That fundamental change to the 1944 Act was introduced last Friday, although it was trailed in *The Daily Mail* a day earlier. The change, fundamental to the balance of power in education, has not been arrived at through consultation or consensus. The Government have simply determined to use their majority to achieve the change, without canvassing opinion inside or outside Parliament. Ministers are making policy on the hoof. Their policies will not stand the test of time, and the present Secretary of State is not well known for his willingness to consult on any issue.

Mr. Pawsey: Does the hon. Lady agree that only two weeks ago the Secretary of State met representatives of five of the six main teacher unions—a clear sign that he is prepared to listen to what others have to say?

Mrs. Taylor: I fancy that the Secretary of State would rather not receive that type of assistance from the Benches behind him, not least because he has been personally responsible for digging the very hole out of which the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) was trying to rescue him. It was clear from what was said at Question Time earlier that the Secretary of State has still not taken on board many of the fundamental points that the teachers put to him.

I wonder whether the Secretary of State even discussed the issues involved with the Prime Minister. After all, on Friday we had the publication of the new clause, which *The Daily Mail* described as the death knell of local authorities—we have been told that the Secretary of State does not believe in local authorities and thinks they should be abolished—and on the following day the Prime Minister told the Conservative local government conference—many people must have been surprised to learn that there was such a body—that there should be a new partnership between central and local government. If there is to be such a partnership, why is the Secretary of State trying to abolish the responsibility and accountability in education that local authorities have had under the Education Act 1944?

In Committee, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools—who, unlike the Secretary of State, was present for all our sessions; I suppose that the Government had to be represented by someone—made it clear that he regarded any Conservatiive councillor as having a vested interest. When we asked him about his attitude towards

Conservative education leaders who had reservations about the Bill, he dismissed them as vested interests. I wonder whether he discussed the matter with the Prime Minister or took on board his right hon. Friend's claimed new spirit of co-operation with local authorities.

The new clause confirms that the Secretary of State wants a national system of education under his personal political control. He is making it clearer than ever that schools that become grant-maintained will not be opting out of local authority control but will be opting into centralised control under the right hon. Gentleman's direction. He will, as now, determine the curriculum, the level of funding and the number of teachers and, as the Parliamentary Under-Secretary said, the Government do not believe that the class size issue is relevant to the quality of education.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): The hon. Lady has spoken at length about the powers of the Secretary of State. Will she comment on the objectives of the new clause which those powers will be used to achieve? In other words, will she speak about my right hon. Friend's powers to improve standards and to increase diversity and opportunity for choice? What has she to say to parents about those issues? What is her philosophy towards, and her policies on, education and standards?

Mrs. Taylor: I remind the hon. Gentleman that his right hon. Friend said at Question Time this afternoon that during 14 years of Conservative rule the problems of illiteracy in Britain had increased. I accept that we need improved standards, but there is no sign of such standards being achieved for all children in Britain under the Conservatives.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): If the hon. Lady is arguing that many grant-maintained schools are effectively opting into central Government control, may I ask her to square that with the remarks of her predecessor, the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw)—a quite intelligent Labour Front-Bench spokesman—who said in June 1992 that parents and governors might feel bound to make decisions about what was best for their schools and that Labour must not appear to be in opposition to those parents? If parents feel that they can take more control of decisions relating to their schools, they cannot feel that they are opting into control by central Government.

Mrs. Taylor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. While I do not recall him praising my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) when he was shadow Secretary of State, I am sure that my hon. Friend will accept the praise retrospectively. There have been occasions when parents have suggested that a school should become grant maintained to protect its comprehensive nature. I believe that some parents will take that course, and I shall appreciate their concern in view of the selection that is being introduced.

Ms. Armstrong: My hon. Friend may recall that I was a member of the Labour education team at the time to which the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) referred. We were then particularly referring to parents in Kent, Tory Wandsworth and other Conservative authorities where schools were being starved and were having imposed on them a system of education that they did not want. Therefore, in order to preserve the strength of comprehensive education, which they wanted their children to continue to enjoy, we said that perhaps we had to allow them to make that choice. The Tories were not allowing them any decisions or any choice over the future education of their children.

5 pm

Mr. Pawsey: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I know that it would not be the intention of the hon. Member for Durham, North West (Ms. Armstrong) to mislead the House in any way. We recognise that she is a person of integrity, but I fear that, inadvertently, she has not entirely answered the point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Pawsey: I have in my possession a copy of the press release that was published at the time. It is headed

"Labour publishes new advice on opting-out."

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that that is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mrs. Taylor: I think that my——

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea) *rose*——

Mrs. Taylor: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later, but I am answering the point first. I remind the hon. Gentleman that we are working to a guillotine, because his Government have limited the time for discussion of this Bill.

When the White Paper was published, followed by the Bill, many people outside the House expressed concern at the centralisation of decision making in education. There are now many people whose anxiety has increased as the Bill has gone through Committee and the Secretary of State has taken more powers to himself.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): My hon. Friend will agree with me that from the beginning of this debate it has been clear that the Bill has nothing to do with standards. It is designed to centralise education and obliterate local education authorities. That has been the main aim of the Bill from the first day.

Mrs. Taylor: My hon. Friend is right. Sometimes Ministers have been honest about that, and sometimes they have tried to disguise that purpose. I think that it is true to say that Conservative councillors involved in education, as well as Labour councillors and those from other parties, are desperately concerned about the power that the Secretary of State has already, the way in which he uses that power and the constant interference in education by Ministers. I believe that their concern would increase were the Government to get their way and add the new clause to the Bill.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. I seek merely to correct an impression that might otherwise mislead the House. I have in my possession the press notice that was issued by the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). It is headed:

"Labour publishes new advice on opting-out."

The date is 10 June 1992 and the relevant section is:

"it must be recognised that local circumstances will vary. The community of schools is under threat of being broken up, but parents and governors may feel bound to make decisions

[Mr. Pawsey]

about what they think is best for their school. Labour must not appear to be placed in a hostile position of opposition to such parents.."

That is the relevant issue.

Mrs. Taylor: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for confirming what my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstong) said; that that was in relation to Kent and Wandsworth. I remind the hon. Gentleman that the majority of schools that have opted out have been in Conservative-controlled authorities. The Secretary of State who introduced the original legislation said that he expected opt-out to take place in areas where there were poor local authorities and parents wanted to escape from them. It is very evident that, if that is the reasoning behind opting out, it is in Tory areas that there is the greatest level of dissatisfaction.

Mr. Bowis *rose——*

Mrs. Taylor: No, I must carry on. Hon. Members will complain if I do not draw my remarks to a close.

There was a great deal of concern when Ministers first decided to take these extra powers. The Association of County Councils, which is a Conservative-dominated body, called it a constitutional Bill and expressed its alarm; the Churches expressed their concern at the extra powers that the Secretary of State was taking; and even the Conservative Education Association talked about the Secretary of State trying to nationalise our schools, and said that the Bill proposed a frightening over-centralisation of power in the hands of the Secretary of State. And that was before this new clause was introduced.

No Secretary of State should be, or should try to be, all-powerful in education. No Secretary of State—not even a Labour one—has a monopoly of wisdom. I am disappointed that the Secretary of State does not share his Prime Minister's commitment to having a partnership between central and local government. Just as the delivery of education at school level is best achieved by a proper partnership between parents and teachers, so the structure of education in this country would be best achieved by a partnership between central and local government.

Ministers are not interested in partnership. This Secretary of State wants to grab all powers to himself. That cannot be the way forward, and for that reason we oppose these proposals.

Mr. Bowis: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether it is in order to respond to this first debate, as the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman just has, without referring to amendment (b) standing in her name. There has been no reference to any Labour policy on this measure.

Mrs. Taylor: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I not only sought to move that amendment, but asked the Secretary of State what his response would be. I spelt out very clearly the principle of equity established in our amendment. I hope that the hon. Gentleman's interest in that amendment means that he will vote for it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That has answered the point of order.

Mr. Harry Greenway: I have listened to my right hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) with great interest. Each seemed to me to seek to use party political and national history to illustrate their versions of events and their views on what ought to be happening in education in this country.

For my money, my right hon. Friend is going in the right direction. The central reason for that is the promotion of the theme of independence and of choice and diversity in education. One is bound, looking at the matter historically, to compare that with the Labour party's record. As the Bible says, by their deeds ye shall know them. I always remember that when I pay attention to the Labour party. One never wants to listen to what Labour party supporters say; one must watch what they do.

This is the party that produced circular 10/66, which said that we would have a unitary system of education; we would abolish all grammar schools, independent schools, single sex schools, and all the rest. We would have one form of secondary education—comprehensive. There is a lot to be said for that system—I worked in it for well over 20 years—but to say that everything else must be jettisoned simply for this unitary form of education was preposterous.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Greenway: I intend to be very brief, but I will give way once.

Mr. Hall: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that circulars 10/65 and 10/66 were advice by the Department of Education to local authorities, and that it was up to the latter to determine whether it was carried out?

Mr. Greenway: Yes, but "advice" in inverted commas. It was very heavy advice, and local authorities knew very well that they had to observe it. *[Interruption.]* I was in schools, and I know very well what the pressure was. I suppose that I was working for the most socialist authority in the country—the Inner London education authority. Its response was to get rid of every grammar and voluntary school. I remember hearing the chairman of the schools sub-committee of ILEA, Mrs. Irene Chaplin, tell the heads of all voluntary-aided schools, "We're going to do you." What did she mean? She intended to get rid of them.

ILEA intended to get rid of all diversity in education in London, and it produced the London plan, which aimed to produce 97 comprehensive schools out of all the secondary modern, grammar, and technical schools, many of which were so excellent. Why did ILEA do so? It was a response to heavy "advice" from the Labour Government, who wanted identical education for all children in secondary schools. Their aim was to achieve a unique socialist child or protegé. Comprehensive schools were designed not to give children an education for life, but to produce socialists.

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend has heard the Opposition pay lip service to local accountability today. Does he recall what happened when local education authorities voted to oppose central Government diktat? Does he recall what happened every time that parents, teachers and schools sought to oppose it? They were overruled.

Mr. Greenway: There is no doubt that the Labour party's education record has been highly authoritarian,

and that it never encouraged schools to have an individual approach. The proposal of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will ensure, by law, that schools may have such an approach in future, and I warmly welcome it.

Freedom and choice in schools are essential. The Labour party has argued that the Bill will centralise education, but it could not be more wrong. Every secondary school in my constituency is, or is on the way to being, grant maintained, and they choose that route by first balloting parents of children at the school. What could be more democratic?

Mr. Hall: What is the local authority?

Mr. Greenway: When the ballot was set up at the school attended by the children of the former Leader of the Opposition, the then Labour-controlled Ealing council sent in all the heavies——

Mr. Patten: There was intimidation.

Mr. Greenway: Yes, there was tremendous intimidation. The council sent in the education officer, the deputy education officer and the chairman of the education committee, whose father is the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—every heavy that one could think of—to pressurise the parents against voting to make Drayton Manor high school grant maintained; but the parents fought it and took a democratic decision. They threw off Labour party pressure to go grant maintained. The debate was long and lasted many months, but the ballot could not have been more democratic or more decisive, which was a slap in the face to local socialists, to the then Leader of the Opposition and to the Labour party.

First, parents are balloted; secondly, the Bill will ensure that grant-maintained schools and many of those with local management, which all schools will soon have, will take decisions locally.

How was it done in the long days of Labour Governments? One could not take decisions locally then. My last school, which was built by the Labour-controlled ILEA—before that it was the London county council—had five gymnasiums, and they all leaked. How long did it take for the roofs to be repaired? First, I had to contact the local education authority's architects department, and after six months it sent for the GLC architects. When they could not come, they sent in contractors. After a couple of years, the job was put out to contract, and eventually the leaks were repaired. Grant-maintained schools will be able to call in builders to fix leaks the day after they occur. Such independence is a great improvement and will be of tremendous value to schools.

Finally, giving independence to schools, which the Bill once enacted will do through new clause 22, will grant them a crucial decision-making power over how to spend their cash. For example, Northholt high school has decided to change from local authority cleaners to a cleaning company, which saves £70,000. That money has gone towards more teachers, pens, pencils, rubbers, books and all the rest, and that was a local decision.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most important advantages of new clause 22, once it becomes law, will be that schools will have the opportunity to spend money on building improvements? For example, in my constituency the Labour-controlled local authority is insisting that a school should install another old terrapin building, when the governors and the head teacher know that they could get a new, brick-built classroom for less.

Mr. Greenway: My hon. Friend has such a good argument. I cannot understand why Opposition Members do not accept the arguments for independence and freedom put forward by Conservative Members to involve the local community, whether parents with children at the school or well-wishers, such as pensioners who enjoy attending school functions and others near the schools. They will become more involved, schools will improve and the children will benefit. Surely that is what it is all about.

The reorganisation of London schools wasted between 10 and 20 years, and children's education suffered grievously. That must never happen again, and it will not under the Bill.

5.15 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): First, I join the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) in welcoming the Secretary of State to the debate. We are all delighted that he will at last join our detailed discussion of the Bill, for which he claims personal responsibility.

Many hon. Members will have seen the press release of new clause 22 put out by the Secretary of State, which explicitly stated that the new clause was being tabled because schools are in the driving seat. Those of us who have studied the changes in legislation in recent years will know that that is being economical with the truth. The reality is that the Secretary of State is firmly in the driving seat. He has closed the doors of his vehicle so that he cannot hear what anyone else is saying, save for those few who have decided to get in with him. The Secretary of State has determined the direction and the route that will be taken, and many people are concerned about that.

The new clause states:

"The Secretary of State . . . shall exercise . . . his powers in respect of those bodies in receipt of public funds".

I hope that that means that local education authorities will be included in the list.

Mr. Patten *indicated assent.*

Mr. Foster: I see that the Secretary of State nods. I know that many hon. Members fear for the long-term future of local education authorities because of the hammer blows that the Government have dealt them.

The new funding authorities established through this legislation will also be included in the list. My problem is that I do not understand—and it has not been explained to me in a way that I can understand—how the Secretary of State will exercise his powers through those two bodies. He was not with us when we debated this issue in Committee, but perhaps I can remind him that, in respect of the working relationship between LEA and the funding authorities, he said:

"There will be two bodies—the LEA and the funding agency—with parallel but not shared responsibilities."—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 635.]

Some of us did not understand that and, in Committee, we pressed the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools to explain it. At one point, he said:

"We have no difficulty accepting the concept of shared responsibility"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 1 December 1992; c. 391.]

He was already beginning to contradict the Secretary of State.

[Mr. Foster]

Finally, in what the Under-Secretary called his definitive explanation, he said in Committee:

"there is shared responsibility exercised by parallel duties." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 8 December 1992; c. 517.]

I hope that the Secretary of State will take particular note of that, as it directly contradicts his statement. None of us really understood what that meant, so we have grave reservations about new clause 22(2), which states that the Secretary of State will exercise his powers

"in respect of those bodies in receipt of public funds".

What is even more worrying about the new clause is the way in which subsection (3) is significantly infused with Tory party dogma. It refers to the Secretary of State exercising his powers

"with a view, among other things, to improving standards, encouraging diversity and increasing opportunities for choice."

Those words are harmless enough on the face of it, but given what we have come to know the Secretary of State to mean by them, they are extremely destructive in his hands. Many hon. Members will have noticed that, when the right hon. Gentleman introduced the new clause, he did not quote those words precisely; he put it rather differently and spoke about the power to improve standards, mainly through encouraging diversity and increasing choice. That reinforces my point about the new clause representing Conservative party dogma.

When the Secretary of State talks about improving standards, he fails to do so in the way that most of us consider to be vital—by making a significant improvement to the resources available to our schools. When the Secretary of State talks about judging standards, as he did in the debate about the key stage 3 English standard assessment task, the SAT, he is talking about simplistic paper and pencil tests. The right hon. Gentleman may talk about encouraging diversity, but many of us are increasingly concerned that what he means is the back-door introduction of selection by ability. The decision on Southlands girls school reinforces our concern.

The Secretary of State's concept of choice is different from that understood by many others. It is therefore surprising that he introduced a new clause that included the word "choice", especially when the Under-Secretary has accepted that that word is inappropriate. It was the right hon. Gentleman's own Minister who referred back to the words contained within the right hon. Gentleman's White Paper, which explained that parents had the ability "to express a preference" for a school. Many of us know that the choice of school is not available to the vast majority of parents.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: On the question of choice, is the hon. Gentleman aware of the situation in Hillingdon, where many of the secondary schools became grant maintained, and where, as a result, a smaller proportion of parents are now getting their first choice of secondary school for their children than under the old system?

Mr. Foster: The hon. Lady has illustrated the concern that many of us feel about the concept of choice, as used by the Secretary of State and his colleagues on the Conservative Benches, which is merely rhetoric. It is not borne out by the options available to parents.

The hon. Member for Crosby (Sir. M. Thornton) is even more trenchant than I have been in his criticism of the use of the word "choice". I should remind the Secretary of State that that hon. Gentleman said:

"To be told that you have the freedom to choose is a sick joke when the only choice is between losing teachers or slashing an already reduced sum for capitation."

The Secretary of State may talk about choice, but he still refuses to allow legislation to be introduced that would enable future generations of parents to have the option to allow their children's schools to opt out of grant-maintained status and back into LEA control.

In Committee, we discovered that one of the reasons that we were there was for the Secretary of State—or in his absence, the Under-Secretary—to explain their thinking behind the Bill. The words of the new clause may seem fine, but when we analyse the underlying principle and what it would mean if it rested in the hands of the Secretary of State, we must all be extremely concerned.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I welcome the new clause. I cannot think of anyone in whose hands those powers and responsibilities would be better placed than my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I have one slight proviso: I hope that they will always rest in such good hands, because I am a little worried that, at some point in the future, improving standards may not be part of the picture.

On Second Reading and in Committee there was little mention of nursery education and I should like to spend a few moments considering it. Evidence has been gained from this country and many others of the effectiveness of early education. In countries where children have access to good-quality pre-school education the evidence suggests that they have an advantage when starting school. They score higher marks in the SATs at the age of seven and do better at school at the age of 10 on a variety of scores.

In the United States, research has revealed the long-term benefits of nursery education, which include a reduced likelihood of delinquency in later years—that is of particular importance in the light of recent events in this country and the statement made by the Home Secretary only this afternoon. That research also revealed that nursery education resulted in fewer referrals to special education schools and fewer unwanted teenage pregnancies and that children went on to enjoy happier marriages and a better job life than those who did not benefit from such education. One report of particular importance, bearing in mind that it covered two departments, revealed that for every dollar spent, $4·30 was saved. It is important, therefore, to appreciate that nursery education is a question not merely for the Treasury, but for policy decision.

In Committee, the Under-Secretary rejected amendment No. 83 because he said that it was unnecessary and pointless. It had been moved by the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice), who made an extremely good speech; I endorse much of what she said. The Under-Secretary was good enough to accept amendment No. 105, which added a reference to nursery schooling to schedule 2.

The Minister also referred to the Education Acts of 1944 and 1980 and he correctly pointed out that neither required previous or future funding of nursery education —more's the pity, to my mind. Many LEAs, however, provide such education now and I believe that many more should be encouraged to do so.

The new clause establishes the Secretary of State's responsibility for, and powers over, the conduct of all educational institutions in England and Wales that receive public funding. I am sure that he would want to clarify how the provision for nursery schooling will be made in the future. That raises two questions, the first of which relates to the general level of funding for nursery education. There is certainly a lack of clarity about the Government's future funding policy for it.

I should like increased resources for nursery education, and have argued about the effectiveness of such expenditure, both earlier in my speech and on previous occasions. However, my immediate concern is to ensure both a continuing commitment to nursery education and that expenditure is maintained, at least at current levels. That is one way forward.

5.30 pm

There are three other possible ways forward. The first is to earmark funding for services for children under five at both central and local government level. The second way is to accept the longer-term need for increased spending on nursery education and reflect that in increased standard spending assessments. The third way is to make provision statutory or to return to the pre-1980 position, where local authorities had a duty to provide nursery education, with additional resourcing as required. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my hon. Friend the Minister will clarify the position.

In Committee, my hon. Friend the Minister said that the Government did not intend:

"that the duty of the funding agency of the schools funding council for Wales to secure sufficient school places should include a duty to secure nursery places. The LEA's duty under section 8 of the Education Act 1944, to which the duty of the funding authority is linked in paragraph 3(3) and (5) of schedule 2, does not include a duty to secure sufficient nursery places—it is not the intention that the funding agency or the funding council should cover nursery education. However, if on further reflection we believe that that may be the case, we shall return to it at a later stage."

I hope that there is a promise hanging there. My hon. Friend continued:

"if a school with full-time nursery provision becomes grant-maintained it will be funded in total by the funding agency for schools. That will not be so if the school offers only part-time provision."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee E,* 3 December 1992; c. 483-84.]

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am a little concerned about to which of the Government's new clauses or amendments the hon. Gentleman is speaking. I think that many Opposition Members will endorse what he is saying about nursery education, but we fail to see the relevance of his speech now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The scope of the new clause is wide, and it refers to nursery education. The hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) is in order: if he were not, I should have ruled him out of order.

Mr. Rathbone: The subject could not be more pertinent, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is taking on more and more responsibility for the funding. We are discussing an important point of principle as well as a point of practice. I hope that I have illustrated by the two quotations that I gave from my hon. Friend the Minister that there appears to be an inherent tension between the two extracts, particularly since some definitions of full time might include the majority of nursery provision.

The proposals on the common funding formula are currently out for consultation. There still appears to be some confusion over what constitutes full-time provision and what constitutes part-time provision. In a recent High Court case—I believe that it involved Lewisham—it was contended that nursery education was provided on a daily basis. Even if it was provided for only a part of each day or if pupils attended only part time, that constituted full-time provision. It appears that full-time, but not part-time, nursery education will be funded by the funding agency, with the cost to be recovered from the LEA.

There are five possible policies, and I seek clarification from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about which policy, or which combination of policies, will be adopted.

Mr. Steinberg: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a great danger that if a local education authority, particularly a Conservative one, finds that its schools have opted out and it no longer controls education in its area other than nursery education, that authority might provide no nursery education? It could be that the only local authorities providing nursery provision will be those controlled by the Labour party, which already has an excellent record on nursery provision.

Mr. Rathbone: I certainly agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is a risk of that happening. However, his comments about Conservative-controlled education authorities is incorrect. He need only to refer to the *Hansard* Committee report to see the clear description of the marvellous job done by the Conservative authority in Wandsworth.

To return to my first points: first, clarification is needed on the role of the funding agency and the funding council for Wales in relation to nursery education. Secondly, if grant-maintained schools, through the funding agency, are to be funded for full-time nursery education, clarification is needed about what constitutes full-time provision and what constitutes part-time provision in respect of the common funding formula.

Thirdly, if the funding agency is to be responsible for funding nursery education, it will be important to ensure that its membership includes at least one experienced early teaching specialist.

Fourthly, and crucially, there is a need to safeguard the ability of the LEA to locate nursery provision where it is most needed. If grant-maintained schools are able to demand new nurseries, local education authorities will effectively have to fund those by losing money from their standard spending assessment, which will be re-routed through the funding agency to the grant-maintained school. That would have an impact on the LEA's ability to fund its own nurseries on a continuing basis.

Fifthly, the Bill enables the Secretary of State to require inter-authority recoupment on under-five pre-school provision. I hope that he will use that provision. I should welcome clarification on those matters.

Mr. Enright: The Secretary of State said that the Bill was of straightforward simplicity, but that phrase should be properly interpreted. It is a Bill of downright naivety,

[Mr. Enright]

which illustrates the Government's problems as they panic instead of considering and understanding the causes of anxiety, and acting to resolve them.

I took the trouble to look at the Government's history on education Acts. There was the Education Act 1979, the Education Act 1980, the Education Act 1981, and further legislation on education in 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985, but the Government still did not have it right. Therefore, in 1986 they introduced three education Bills that became the Education Act 1986, the Education (Amendment) Act 1986 and the Education (No. 2) Act 1986——

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): There is a consistency.

Mr. Enright: The Government were not consistent as, thereafter, they gave up as there were a few other semi-important pieces of legislation such as the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and the poll tax legislation. Therefore, we had a couple of years without anything until, in 1988, we had the great Education Reform Act, but still the Government had not got it right. They would have been far better advised to sit down in 1979 and appoint a royal commission on education so that we could find the best way forward.

The Secretary of State's problem is that he has no underlying philosophy or principles to guide him as to what should be done in education. The Secretary of State should be like Lochinvar leading forth the teachers and the educational world into a new age. Instead, he behaves much more like the first world war generals, who stayed behind and shot soldiers in the rear as they went forward. The Secretary of State cannot distinguish between tactics and strategy or between the purpose of war and the actions required to win the war.

The Secretary of State referred to the 1944 Act, and gave me credit for new clause 22. I am grateful to him for that, but, alas, the words with which he chose to replace the 1944 Act were wrong, as, indeed, was his interpretation of the Act. The Secretary of State clearly said that it refers only to LEAs, but it does not. It refers to a tripartite arrangement between schools, local education authorities and the Secretary of State for Education. It is a tragedy that it was abolished. The 1944 Act showed that the authorities knew the distinction between being progressive and being effective, and they honed their weapons accordingly. They knew of the desire for the varied as well as for the comprehensive. They knew of the duty of a local education authority to stimulate the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of all pupils. All that is wiped out by new clause 22—tossed aside in an effort to satisfy the Secretary of State's megalomania.

New clause 22 emphasises and underlines the Secretary of State's power. He is to take to himself the task of monitoring standards. The hon. Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) said that by their deeds shall ye know them. The Secretary of State is to monitor standards. What a track record he has, on the way in which English in particular has been introduced. It is absurd to suggest for one moment that illiteracy can be removed by looking at gobbets from "The Importance of Being Earnest". It is a means, but one must make sure that the proper resources are there.

The Secretary of State talks of encouraging diversity, at a time when he is squeezing out syllabus subjects such as classics and imposing syllabuses that are so prescriptive that Hitler and Stalin would have looked upon the right hon. Gentleman proudly as an heir to their tradition. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about Lenin?"] Lenin would not have looked at the right hon. Gentleman in that way—Lenin never looked at anyone in that sort of way.

If the Secretary of State wants to withdraw some of the prescriptions that he is putting in the various syllabuses, I should welcome it, but every act of this Secretary of State has shown that he wants to act as a dictator—that he knows best and that no one else can contribute advice that he will take.

Mr. Hawkins: Does the hon. Gentleman defend the practice of many left-leaning teachers, who believe that rap music is an appropriate subject to be studied in English lessons? Would he not prefer the works of Oscar Wilde, such as "The Importance of Being Earnest"? Does he not agree that is the right recipe for children to learn good English?

Mr. Enright: What an extraordinary statement. Teachers in any school know best what will fire the imagination and enthusiasm of their pupils. They use a whole variety of methods to stimulate their pupils—as I did. To help my pupils discover what the optative and subjunctive are all about, I translated Beatles songs into Latin—which would no doubt be to the fury of the hon. Gentleman, but it contributed to effective teaching. Many teachers do the same and it is wholly absurd of the hon. Gentleman to ridicule teachers who are working effectively at the chalk face, at a job which he could never do.

The Secretary of State talks of giving increased choice, but what increased opportunities for choice do pupils have——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Enright: I will do so when I have finished making this point, even though the hon. and learned Gentleman has only just strolled—I nearly said the wrong word—into the Chamber.

The Secretary of State deliberately refused choice to 16-year-olds of the equivalent of the baccalaureate, thereby reducing their choices at 18-plus. I give way to the decorously dressed hon. and learned Gentleman.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: As a classicist myself with first-class honours, I should be interested to hear a rendition of a Beatles song, with all the words in English translated into Latin by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Enright: Certainly.
"Habitamus sub vitreo,
Sub vitreo,
Sub vitreo"——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has been a Member of the House long enough to know its rules full well.

Mr. Enright: I apologise unreservedly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I could not resist the hon. and learned Gentleman's challenge.

New clause 22 is totally inadequate to achieve the aims that we have for our children and the philosophy that the Opposition adopt towards improving education standards

not just for the few but for all our children. That means increasing the power of their imagination. That is what we should be examining, and it is that which the Secretary of State consistently curbs by his actions.

5.45 pm

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): The importance of new clause 22 is that it acknowledges that we have a changed system, in which more schools are going grant maintained —which I welcome. The 650 schools that have already voted for GM status are just a drop in the ocean. Many more are considering that course. One reason is the continuing antics of many local education authorities—antics that do not serve well the schools in their areas.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I can tell my hon. Friend that a conference in Birmingham within the next two weeks on grant-maintained schools has been oversubscribed by no fewer than 35 schools, who are desperate to be free of the control of appalling Labour local authorities.

Mrs. Knight: My hon. Friend's intervention shows only too clearly how the momentum is gathering and that schools view GM status as the best option for serving the children in their areas.

In Derbyshire, many head teachers are most worried about the way in which the local authority is seeking to prejudice the education given in some schools by the way that it distributes funds. One head pointed out recently that some schools receive £1,600 per pupil, while others get as much as £2,400—a gap of £800. He adds, most eloquently:

"If one examines the surpluses left over at the end of the year, it indicates the enormous differences and unfairnesses in the Derbyshire system. The council is quite blatantly failing in its duty to fund schools according to their needs."

That is an example of the way that some education authorities are choosing not to provide schools with the funds that they require. The importance of grant-maintained schools is that they are funded according to their needs.

Ms. Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): If the hon. Lady is so concerned about funding inequalities within an LEA area, will she comment on the situation in Birmingham, where four grant-maintained schools have been given half a million pounds between them, whereas the other 500 schools have been given only £6 million between them all? Does the hon. Lady consider that the Secretary of State acted equitably in the way that he distributed money between Birmingham schools?

Mrs. Knight: I understand that the hon. Lady is referring to capital allocations. If the schools make a good case, they will be funded. If they fail to do so, they will not be funded. The hon. Lady will find that many LEAs, including mine—and, I suspect, hers as well—have not given their schools the finances that they need, because those authorities have chosen to spend their capital elsewhere. I urge the hon. Lady to tell Birmingham city council that it is imperative that it spends more of its capital on schools. That authority is notorious for underfunding every school in its area. I am surprised that the hon. Lady did not make that point in her intervention.

It was interesting to hear from the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), who was conspicuous by her absence in Committee. She said that, in her view, the Bill was intent on abolishing local education authorities. That is a travesty of what the Bill is about; its purpose is to allow parents to choose what is best for their children, for the school that their children attend and for the community. It is not about the Department saying this and the LEA saying that; it is about parents being able to make independent decisions about schools. That is a fundamental part of raising standards. It must be recognised that it is a movement which is continuing throughout the country, and that changes must be made in institutions to accommodate it.

Earlier speakers cited the Association of County Councils as an authority which did not support the Bill. In a letter to me, the association said that it welcomed the Government's present policies for education, and this Bill. It said:

"In particular, we are pleased to see the continuing drive for higher standards in schools, more open accountability to parents, greater day-to-day managerial independence for schools of all kinds, the merger of the bodies responsible for the curriculum and for its assessment, and stronger governing bodies."

That, surely, is evidence of the association's support for the Bill.

It is interesting to note that the Church, too, now wishes to swell the number of grant-maintained schools. I recall reading an article that stated that one in four bishops is privately in favour of schools opting out of LEA control, and is promoting it in the primary and secondary schools within his jurisdiction. That is very good news, and it provides support for the Government's policies.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) produced a long list of education Bills that have been presented to the House. That shows the importance that Conservative Members ascribe to education: it is proof of this party's willingness to grasp the fact that education is one of the most important and fundamental issues, and to ensure that children receive the best possible education.

I particularly welcome the diversity and choice that are now springing up throughout the country, even in Labour-controlled areas. If an area contains both grant-maintained and LEA schools, choice is provided. Previous Acts of Parliament have removed the artificial restrictions placed on school numbers; now, parents can choose more widely. The city technology college movement is another aspect of the increased choice and diversity that are now available.

I believe that education is a fundamental issue of our times. If we fail children while they are at school, it will be very difficult for them to catch up later. New clause 22 recognises that change has taken place, and that greater changes will follow in the coming years. It is surprising that the Opposition should oppose it: it is a Luddite—indeed, an ostrich—approach to say that local education authorities are the only possible providers of education. Why should that be so? If I must trust someone with responsibility for education, I prefer to trust parents—and the grant-maintained system is all about trusting parents' choice.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): I hope that the new clause will be opposed, for a simple reason: it is fundamental to the drift of Conservative education policy. It starkly demonstrates the way in which power is being concentrated in the hands of the Secretary of State. It does not give power to schools, governors or parents; it gives power to the holder of the office of Secretary of State for Education. It represents one of the most dramatic

[Mr. Stephen Byers]

extensions of Whitehall power since 1945. The wholesale nationalisation of our education service will not lead to greater diversity; all our experience clearly shows that nationalisation, and the dead hand of Whitehall, lead to a uniform system up and down the country, rather than the diversity that the Government pretend to favour.

Choice will be denied to parents, for a simple reason. There is a paradox at the heart of the Bill, and at the heart of new clause 22. On the one hand, the Secretary of State argues in favour of extending parental choice; on the other, because of Treasury pressure, he must remove hundreds of thousands of surplus places from the education system. It is impossible to reconcile the removal of such a large number of surplus places with the extension of parental choice. Parents in Hillingdon and Bromley, where the grant-maintained sector is up and running, are experiencing less choice as a result of the Government's policies.

The new clause repeals an important provision in the 1944 Act—the provision that refers to a partnership in the delivery of education services. The new clause allows the Secretary of State power to dictate to the various bodies involved, whether they are local education authorities or funding agencies. That is power without responsibility. It would bad enough to give such a power to any Secretary of State; it is even worst to give it to the present Secretary of State, who runs away from arguments, fears debate and is scared of questions. He is the Scarlet Pimpernel of the education world: they seek him here, they seek him there, but we all know that they will never find him at an education conference. He runs away from his critics, and, as a result, our children suffer.

In the introduction to the White Paper, the Secretary of State quoted John Ruskin. Let me refer him to another Ruskin quote, which I feel is appropriate to the way in which he speaks from the Dispatch Box. Ruskin wrote:

"Conceit may puff a man up but it can never prop him up."

I think that the Secretary of State has much to learn from that.

Even the right hon. Gentleman's friends are now turning against him. The education editor of *The Daily Telegraph* writes that he is "Aloof, ineffectual, almost invisible", and continues:

"his performance is beginning to provoke derision among his enemies and cause concern to his friends. His report card says he contributes little to discussion in class, lacks initiative, does not do his homework".

The new clause is a blow to local democracy. It will destroy the partnership established in the Education Act 1944. It does nothing to raise standards, improve quality, extend opportunity or provide greater parental choice. Our children and our nation deserve better.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I welcome the new clause as I welcome the Bill. Far from doing what the hon. member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and other members of the Opposition parties have alleged, the new clause will introduce a more equitable distribution of powers between the Government and the councils——

It being Six o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Order [15 December] and Resolution this day, put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 284, Noes 238.

Division No. 164] **[6 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom

Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, [illegible]don *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, [illegible]wn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Question necessary to bring to a decision the Question so proposed.*

Clause added to the Bill.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Question,* That all new clauses standing in the name of a member of the Government, *be added to the Bill.*

New clause 20

LOANS TO GOVERNING BODIES OF GRANT-MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

'.—(1) The appropriate authority may make loans to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools in respect of expenditure of any class or description specified in regulations (referred to in this section as "loan regulations") incurred or to be incurred by the governing bodies for or in connection with such purposes as may be so specified.

(2) Any loan under this section shall be made on such terms as loan regulations may require, being terms specified in or determined in accordance with the regulations.

(3) Where any sum is payable by the governing body of a grant-maintained school to the appropriate authority in respect of the principal of, or interest on, any loan under this section, the appropriate authority may (without prejudice to any other mode of recovery) recover the whole or any part of that sum by deducting it from any grant payable by them to the governing body.

(4) In this section, the "appropriate authority"—

(a) in relation to England before the Funding Agency for Schools begin to exercise their functions, and

(b) in relation to Wales before the Schools Funding Council for Wales begin to exercise their functions,

means the Secretary of State and, in any other case, means the funding authority

(5) The funding authority shall exercise any power conferred on them by this section in such manner (if any) as may be specified in or determined in accordance with loan regulations.'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 26

EXTENSION OF FUNCTIONS OF AUDIT COMMISSION

'.—(1) Section 220 of the Education Reform Act 1988 (extension of functions of Audit Commission) is amended as follows.

(2) At the beginning of subsection (1)(c) there is inserted "the Funding Agency for Schools, the Schools Funding Council for Wales or".

(3) After subsection (2)(bb) there is inserted—

"(bc) with respect to studies relating to the Funding Agency for Schools, the agency;

(bd) with respect to studies relating to the Schools Funding Council for Wales, the council".

(4) In subsection (2)(c) after "school," there is inserted "the funding authority or".'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 27

FUNDING AUTHORITIES: COMPULSORY PURCHASE OF LAND

'. In section 17(4) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 (statutory undertakers) after paragraph (a) of the definition of "statutory undertakers" there is inserted—

"(aa) the Funding Agency for Schools,

(ab) the Schools Funding Council for Wales".'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 28

APPROVAL OF PREMISES OF MAINTAINED OR GRANT-MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOLS

'.—(1) Where a body serve under section 169(6) of this Act notice of proposals for the establishment of a school which is specially organised to make special educational provision for pupils with special educational needs, they shall submit to the Secretary of State the particulars in respect of the proposed premises of the school mentioned in subsection (3) below.

(2) Where a body serve under section 169(6) of this Act notice of proposals for making a prescribed alteration to a special school, they shall if the Secretary of State so directs submit to him the particulars in respect of the premises or proposed premises of the school mentioned in subsection (3) below.

(3) The particulars are—

(a) particulars of the provision made or to be made in respect of the means of access to and within the premises or proposed premises of the school, and

(b) such other particulars in respect of the premises or proposed premises of the school as the Secretary of State may require,

and they shall be submitted at such time and in such form and manner as the Secretary of State may direct.

(4) The particulars submitted under subsection (3)(a) above shall indicate the extent to which the provision referred to conforms with the minimum requirements, so far as they are relevant to school premises, of—

(a) Design Note 18 "Access for Disabled People to Educational Buildings" published in 1984 on behalf of the Secretary of State, or

(b) if that Note has been replaced by a document prescribed by regulations made or having effect as if made under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, that document.

(5) Particulars submitted under this section in respect of the premises or proposed premises of the school require the approval of the Secretary of State.

(6) Where any proposals falling within subsection (1) or (2) above are required to be implemented, they shall be implemented in accordance with any particulars approved under this section.'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

GRANTS BY SECRETARY OF STATE IN RESPECT OF AIDED AND SPECIAL AGREEMENT SCHOOLS

'.—(1) The Secretary of State may—

(a) in the case of any aided school or special agreement school, or

(b) where proposals have been approved under section 13 of the Education Act 1980 (establishment etc. of voluntary schools) for a school or proposed school to be maintained as a voluntary school and the Secretary of State has made an order under section 15 of the Education Act 1944 (classification of schools) directing that the school be an aided school,

make grants to the governing body in respect of expenditure falling within subsection (2) below incurred by them.

(2) The expenditure referred to in subsection (1) above is expenditure in respect of the provision, alteration or repair of premises or equipment for the school or proposed school.

(3) The amount of any grant paid under this section to the governing body in respect of any such expenditure—

(a) shall not exceed 85 per cent. of the expenditure, and

(b) in the case of any prescribed class or description of such expenditure, shall be such as may be determined in accordance with regulations.

(4) The times at which, and the manner in which, payments are made in respect of grant under this section shall be such as may be determined from time to time by the Secretary of State.

(5) A governing body to whom any payment is made in respect of grant under this section shall comply with such requirements determined by the Secretary of State as he may from time to time impose.

(6) Such requirements—

(a) may be imposed on or at any time after the making of any payment by reference to which they are imposed, and

(b) may at any time be waived, removed or varied by the Secretary of State.

(7) Such requirements may, in particular, if any conditions specified in the requirements are satisfied, require the payment to the Secretary of State of the whole or any part of the following amount.

(8) That amount is—

(a) the amount of the payments made in respect of the grant under this section, or

(b) so much of the value of any premises or equipment in respect of which grant was paid under this section as is determined in accordance with the requirements to be properly attributable to the payment of such grant,

whichever is the greater.

(9) No grant may be paid under this section—

(a) in respect of any expenses incurred in the provision of any premises which it is the duty of the local education authority to provide, or

(b) in the case of a special agreement school, in respect of expenses incurred in the execution of proposals to which the special agreement relates or of repairs or alterations for the execution of which provision is made by the agreement.

(10) In relation to a proposed school, the references in this section to the governing body, in relation to any time before such a body is constituted, are to the persons who propose to establish the school; and where requirements are imposed in relation to grant paid under this section to such persons, the governing body, when it is constituted, as well as those persons shall comply with the requirements.'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

6.15 pm

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I have an announcement to make. Madam Speaker earlier today undertook to look again at amendments 98 and 99 to clause 156. In view of the explanation of the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) of the intention about amendment No. 97, Madam Speaker is now prepared to allow amendments Nos. 98 and 99 to be debated in the same group. This debate will be reached after the guillotine at 10 pm in the group that is led by amendment No. 42 to clause 148.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, concerning new clause 19 and amendment No. 56. These are a new clause and an amendment, in the alternative, which would allow those children whose parents have a special view about the effect of sex education the right to opt out of the lessons at school, and for those matters to be taught within the family. This affects not only the Plymouth Brethren but also a number of other children in respect of whom—I will leave that. I ask that Madam Speaker reconsider the selection of this new clause and/or the amendment because this affects many children throughout the country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I assure the hon. Member that Madam Speaker has very seriously considered her selection and no doubt she will have taken those points into consideration when she made her decision. The Speaker has decided the selection and I can say no more.

Mr. Bermingham: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does that mean that if matters and issues are not considered, and they are of great importance, once a selection is made it can never be altered? We had representations a little while ago which led to an alteration in the selection. I merely ask that the Speaker reconsider the position.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As the hon. Member well knows, representations can be made at the proper time. I am sure he will do that.

New clause 1

MUSIC AND LIBRARY PROVISION

'.—(1) A local education authority may for the purpose only of assisting the governing bodies of maintained or grant-maintained schools in their area or any other area in the performance of the governing bodies' power to provide music tuition and library facilities supply goods or services to them.

(2) This section is without prejudice to the generality of any other power of local education authorities to supply goods or services.'.—*[Mrs. Ann Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following: new clause 14—*Provision of assistance with music*—

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

'.—(1) A local education authority may for the purpose only of assisting the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools, or grant-maintained special schools, in their area in the performance of the functions mentioned in subsection (2) below, supply goods or services to them.

(2) This subsection applies to—

(a) teaching and assessment of music in accordance with the national curriculum, and

(b) tuition of registered pupils in playing any musical instrument (where such tuition is not provided individually).

(3) This section is without prejudice to the generality of any other power of local education authority to supply goods or services.

(4) In this section "national curriculum" has the same meaning as in Part I of the Education Reform Act 1988.'.

Government amendment No. 126.

Mrs. Taylor: I am sorry to see that the Secretary of State has decided to absent himself from the Chamber yet again. It seems that he is interested in this Bill only when it gives him more powers and not when it affects the education of millions of children.

I start by explaining that we have given priority to the issues in new clause 1—music provision and the future of library services—because we think that these issues should have a high priority and are causing great concern outside this House among all those involved in education. I cannot believe that, on this important issue, Ministers will not be willing to think again.

During the Committee stage, which was subject to the guillotine, we managed to protect one morning's sitting to debate what was then clause 244 dealing with the services which local authorities could provide in future to grant-maintained schools. One sitting was not enough to express all our fears; that is one reason why we have chosen to come back to this subject this evening.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady so early in her speech, but she referred to the introduction of the guillotine. I heard her speaking eloquently on the BBC this morning. I wonder whether, when these debates are over, she will look at the recommendations in the second report of the Procedure Committee, dealing with procedure in Standing Committee. She will find that, if that had become part of the procedures of the House, the objections she has been making to the guillotine could well have been overcome, because the members of the Committee themselves would have decided how to use its time to debate every part of the Bill.

Mrs. Taylor: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for those comments, and I think that there is some substance in what he says. I have always resisted the idea of automatic guillotines on Bills, but there is much attraction in the prospect of a special Committee before going on to consider a Bill, and I am willing to think about that idea. I know that the right hon. Gentleman has made a study of the matter, and I appreciate his comments.

In Committee, I moved the amendment to what was then clause 244 in what I hoped was a non-confrontational way, because I wanted to reflect the concerns of people in various political parties about the Government's proposals. Partly because of that, I was genuinely amazed and disappointed at the Ministers' response and at that of some, although perhaps not all, Conservative members of the Committee.

Ministers did not use the opportunity fully to explain their thinking on clause 244, which in the reprinted Bill is now clause 257. In view of what Ministers said at the time, I can conclude only that they do not comprehend the full impact of their own legislation, especially on the provision of music and on the future of the school library service.

We shall be able to debate clause 257 in detail tomorrow. It provides a time limit for the provision of services by local education authorities to grant-maintained schools. New clause 1 seeks to exempt music and school library services from the general provisions of clause 257. Those are not our only concerns about the clause—we shall wish to discuss other matters tomorrow—but they are the two major concerns. I hope that Conservative Members will pause and give some thought to the full implications of the clause if it goes through unamended. Perhaps they will consider that the way forward suggested in new clause 1 will be beneficial for all concerned.

We have two major worries about what might happen if our new clause is not accepted. I am sure that Ministers and Conservative Members, like Opposition Members, have received many representations on the subject. The concerns have ranged over a wide variety of issues. Some local authorities are worried about the continuation of their own services.

Perhaps the aspect that should appeal to Conservative Members most is that, in future, grant-maintained schools will not be allowed to buy the services they choose from wherever they choose. The Government propose that local education authority schools may use or not use local authority services, according to their own choice. However, grant-maintained schools will not have that choice. They will have to rely on the private sector, whether or not the private sector can provide the services required.

I cannot see any circumstances in which the private sector will move in to provide a school library service such as that provided by many local authorities. It is impossible to conceive of the private sector being able to provide the service on the scale that presently exists in many local authority areas. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) said that, in Durham, the school library service had assets, and owned books and equipment, worth £2 million a year. I do not think that the private sector will come in with that sort of money in the hope of being able to make money out of schools wanting to buy its services.

My other concern is that if fewer schools use local authority services the provision of those services to local authority schools, too, may be threatened. That is less likely to happen in Labour-controlled authorities than in Conservative-controlled authorities, because grant-maintained schools are more common in Conservative authorities. Indeed, Tory Kent and Tory Essex have more grant-maintained schools than exist in all Labour authorities put together. So it is in those areas that the pressure for the maintenance of music services and school library services for pupils in local authority schools will come first.

I said that my hon. Friends and I had received many representations on those issues. I do not want to go into them all in detail, because that would take too long, and

I know that my hon. Friends want to raise specific points, but I shall quote from a letter that Larry Westland, the director of Music for Youth, wrote to all hon. Members:

"The superlative standards reached by our young musicians, youth orchestras and choirs is one of the United Kingdom's greatest educational achievements."

My hon. Friends and I concur, and we appreciate the work that Music for Youth has done over the years. Larry Westland went on:

"The Education Bill will, I believe, bring about a diminution in the quality and range of this aspect of music teaching".

What Larry Westland says is just one indication of the whole range of concerns expressed by people outside the House about what will happen in the future. Today I received a letter from the Centre for Young Musicians, which used to be funded by the Inner London education authority; the London boroughs now pay the tuition fees. The Centre for Young Musicians is worried that the allocation of funds to grant-maintained schools will pose future problems for it, and will mean that it will not be able to provide tuition to students irrespective of their financial means, as it has done hitherto.

I know that Conservative Members share some of that concern about the future of music. *[Interruption.]* I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) agrees. The hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), too, expressed some reservations in Committee. I must admit that he and I went to the schools prom together, so I know that he appreciates the musical work of many young people. Following the hon. Gentleman's remarks in Committee, the Minister circulated a letter which tried to allay some of the fears by saying that there could be co-operation over a wider area with orchestras containing pupils from both grant-maintained schools and local authority schools, and other similar arrangements.

However, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not be misled by the Minister's letter. The issue is wider than that. Larry Westland's letter which I quoted also says that, although the national curriculum may provide for some basic music education, there is no requirement whatever for instrumental tuition or specialist vocal tuition to be provided. If the music service in an area were broken up, that could lead only to a reduction in the amount of tuition available.

If the Secretary of State manages to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope that he will show that his concerns on the matter are genuine. I hope that he, and perhaps other Conservative Members, will consider voting with us on this new clause.

6.30 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I want to speak briefly, and to confine my remarks entirely to the subject of music.

I have corresponded with my hon. Friend the Minister on this matter, and he knows my concerns. In writing to him, I was merely reflecting the widespread concern of a great many of my constituents. It has been a long time since I have received so many letters on a single subject as I have on the Staffordshire music service. It is a service of high excellence and one which is held in high repute by people not simply in Staffordshire but throughout the country.

Those constituents who have written to me are fairly enthusiastic, for the most part, and they are certainly not opposed to the idea of grant-maintained status. However, we have had three ballots in my constituency which have gone emphatically—two of them very emphatically—against grant-maintained status. From the correspondence I have received, I believe that one of the reasons—it is only one, and I would say that it is not the most important one, because the campaign has been rather a political one—which has certainly moved many of those who would normally vote with alacrity for grant-maintained status has been the fact that they have felt that the music service is under threat.

I should like a reassurance from my hon. Friend the Minister. Frankly, as I said in my letters, what he has said up until now has not been convincing enough. Of course I fully accept that it will be possible to buy in services. I also accept that it is conceivable that some organisation might come into being which can provide musical services of quality and distinction. However, nothing that my hon. Friend has said in his letters has convinced me of the likelihood—as distinct from the possibility—of that.

Conservative Members should always be concerned to conserve what is good. The music service in Staffordshire is not only good but excellent. Over the past few years, many young people have learnt to master instruments who would never have had that opportunity before. That knowledge and mastery has given them a new self-confidence, as such knowledge and mastery often does. Sometimes, they are not academically bright children. It also gives them the opportunity to work and play in the best sense with others, and to come together across a county.

Only two years ago, the county took over the Royal Albert hall. Parents came from all over the county and —although, sadly, I could not be there—it was by all accounts a most magnificent and moving occasion. It is something which those young people will never forget.

In my constituency, I have a number of school bands and orchestras which are good, partly because young people have the opportunity to play in bigger groups and therefore to rub shoulders with those who may be more proficient than they are. They may also learn from those who may in some degree be more accomplished than the teachers in their own schools. That countywide cross-fertilisation—if I can put it that way—has helped to build up the tremendous reputation which the music service in Staffordshire rightly enjoys.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows that I fully support the concept of grant-maintained schools. My concern relates to the quality of the Staffordshire music service and to its survival. I ask the Minister not to do anything which will put that service in jeopardy. Until now, neither he nor my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, nor anyone else, has convinced either the parents or me that we have an answer in the Bill. Perhaps the answer is to change the present music service into a trust. The Minister referred to a trust in one of his letters.

For goodness' sake, the Government should keep the service, the people, and those who have brought the service into being. They should not simply say, "It can happen. It might happen." They should take positive action to ensure that it does happen.

This matter is much more important to the young people involved and their parents than any doctrinal difference which might separate us across the Floor of the

[Mr. Patrick Cormack]

House. Music is a great unifying force. It brings people out of themselves. It is a language which transcends so many barriers.

Some years ago, I had the privilege of being involved in the establishment of the music therapy charity. One saw at first hand and in a most moving way how those who are often severely disadvantaged can, through music, reach out to goals which they never thought they could attain. Although this centralising Bill—one must say that it is a centralising Bill—may have many fine and good things in it, and although I do not for a moment doubt the total integrity of the Secretary of State and all my ministerial colleagues, and their genuine desire—which we all share—to see the education services in this country not only preserved but made even better, I tell my hon. Friend that the Staffordshire music service is at risk.

I hope that the Minister will take that on board and realise that something must be done to allay the fears of parents in my constituency, throughout Staffordshire and—I am sure—in other parts of the country. I hope that he will undertake to re-examine how such excellence can be preserved in a new era and in new circumstances, so that, whatever label the schools bear which children will go to next year, the year after and in the year 2000, there will still be an opportunity for collective music-making and collective excellence across the country.

The Bill still has quite a way to go. There is another place in which there are many people who are well versed in the matters which we are talking about. Those people have high qualifications and great eminence. When the Bill comes back from another place, I hope that this specific point will have been fully, properly and competently addressed. I appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister to re-examine the matter, because I am sure that he would not like to go on record as one of those who assisted, however unwittingly, in the demise of a service of great excellence and high repute.

Mr. Steinberg: The object of the new clause is to ensure that the schools library facilities and music service are available to all schools, whether they are local education authority maintained or grant maintained. School library facilities and music services require special treatment in the Bill. I believe that they are different from other support services in that they provide a service which is specifically educational. They are not simply providers of goods or administrative support.

I should like to examine specifically the role of the schools library service. School library services are usually run either by the public library service as an agent of the local education authority or directly by the education authority itself. They support the work of the library and information services in primary, secondary and even special schools. Schools library services will typically provide a book exchange scheme for schools, a project loans scheme to support projects undertaken within schools, an advisory service on all aspects of school library management and use, training for teachers in information handling skills and work in schools to promote the enjoyment of reading.

Such services provide essential back-up to library and information services within schools. No individual school could hope to provide all the learning resources necessary to support the curriculum. The schools library service provides a network of professional support for school librarians. Such services are highly commended in most HMI reports. On occasion the reports highlight that the schools library service is the only good thing about a school library.

I hope that the House will support the inclusion of new clause 1 in the Bill. I shall give local examples from the schools library service which my local authority of Durham provides for schools in Durham. The service is known as Durham Learning Resources. It was formed by the amalgamation of the schools library service and the museums education service. It is managed and operated by the arts, libraries and museums department as part of the strategy for serving children within the authority. The costs of the service are re-charged to the education department. The purpose of the service is to give teachers access to materials to support the national curriculum. The materials either supplement the school's resources or are provided in a quantity or quality which the school cannot obtain.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) quoted the information that I had given to her in Committee. Last year the local authority's learning resources service lent almost £2 million of stock to schools in the Durham county area. If that service was not available, what would schools lose? We have to remember that at present no school in Durham has opted out. I hope that none will. However, one or two may opt out in the near future.

If the children in an opted-out school did not have access to the local authority schools library services, they would lose information books. About 25,000 books are kept centrally by Durham county council to enhance the national curriculum. They would lose fiction books. The service has a huge supply of wall charts, picture packs and slides. It has "spoken word" tapes, which is a range of 300 children's stories to stimulate children who have reading difficulties.

The service has a wide collection of almost 3,000 objects, including natural history specimens, geological specimens and costumes from the 19th and 20th century. I could go on and on. All those items are available to the schools in the county. If grant-maintained schools were not allowed to use that service, they would not have the benefit of the articles kept centrally by Durham county council. The service keeps about 4,000 works of art, originals and reproductions, and lends them to schools. If grant-maintained schools were created in Durham, after two years they would not be allowed to borrow such items.

The HMI report which was released recently showed that libraries within schools are badly off. The Book Trust report "Books in Schools" highlighted the importance of reading ability in relation to overall educational attainment. It opened with the statement:

"Rarely have so many pupils had so few books."

The majority of schools do not have adequate library facilities. The school of which I was the head teacher was sadly without a good library simply because books were so expensive that one could not buy them. One had to concentrate on other important items that were needed. The school library was particularly run down. However, I always knew that I had the back-up of the central schools library service. Periodically the staff and I went to county hall and took away literally thousands of books for use within the school.

6.45 pm

What would be the alternatives for grant-maintained schools if they could not take advantage of the schools library service? They would have to operate independently. That would involve huge expense. It has been estimated that such schools would need at least £12,000 per year to develop library resources. That would not include the cost of staff to run the library. If they could not afford to buy the resources, they would have to go to the local library. It would be virtually impossible for a local library to provide the number of books that all the schools in the area would need. Local libraries are too small. They could not stock the range and quantity that would be required.

No other agency, public or private, has established comprehensive collections of resources to support the curriculum. It would require capital investment of about £500,000 to start such a collection. We all know that that figure is too high for any private organisation. There is no evidence to show that the private sector could provide an alternative service in all areas. The private sector has shown little interest in providing public library services where tenders have been invited.

The intention of new clause 1 is to give governors the right to use the local eduation authority schools library service and music service, whether the school is grant maintained or an LEA school. That would ensure that all pupils had access to their full entitlement of library and music services.

I support the new clause with total conviction. I cannot for the life of me understand why the Government are being so stubborn on the issue. It seems to be purely vindictiveness. I cannot see any political or sound educational reason for preventing grant-maintained schools from using LEA services. I can see only the Government's vindictive attitude to local education authorities. The Government's proposal would disadvantage the very children whom the Government say that they want to help—children in grant-maintained schools. I cannot understand it. I am baffled that the Government expect grant-maintained schools to thrive throughout the country yet deprive them of a valuable service which the local education authority can provide.

If the new clause is not included in the Bill, it will prove once and for all without a shadow of doubt that the Bill is nothing to do with improving standards of education for children but is simply a vindictive and hostile move against local education authorities. At the end of the day the children are the ones who will suffer.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) will forgive me if I do not follow him down the library route. I believe that grant-maintained schools already have a good record on spending on books. Spending has risen and is above average in those schools. So I have more confidence on the issue of library services. I should like to concentrate on music, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack).

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I am worried about what the hon. Gentleman suggests. Does he suggest that each school could be self-sufficient in not only books but articles such as works of art and artefacts, which schools library services can provide? That was the implication of his suggestion that some schools were doing well on books. The debate is about more than books.

Mr. Bowis: I was not suggesting that at all. I was simply saying that we should acknowledge that they already have a good record on spending on books. Of course, the issue of libraries and book provision goes wider than that. The facilities exist and schools have the option to take up existing and future services and I am confident that they will do so.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South, I shall concentrate on music. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) referred to the fact that she and I occasionally went to a concert together. I hope that that will not damage her reputation. While we are in confession mode, perhaps I should also confess to having been brought up with Larry Westland's wife. Although we could make many confessions, the only one I wish to put on record is a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the board of the South Bank which plays host to much of the youth and schools music to which we are referring, not least Larry Westland's festival of youth music at the Festival hall and the annual schools proms at the Albert hall.

I know that Larry Westland shares some of my concerns. He would be the first to say that there are plenty of opportunities and I know that he is looking for ways around the problems. He is seeking to get together with the Government and those in the music profession to find ways of ensuring that music education continues. Although the letter that he has sent to hon. Members reflects his concern about existing provision, we have to ensure that the excellent provision in some areas is extended to all parts of the country.

The hon. Member for Dewsbury asked whether I would be supporting the new clause. My answer will have to be no because it does not address the problem that I raised on Second Reading and in Committee and shall repeat today. The new clause may even exclude a solution. It talks about the local education authority giving support and assistance for music tuition and to the teaching of music in accordance with the national curriculum. However, it does not refer to the establishment, nurturing and expansion of the orchestras, bands and choirs which produce the great joy of the music festivals to which I have referred. The new clause specifies

"the purpose only of assisting governing bodies"

with specific tuition, so I do not think that it will help.

We need constantly to examine the problem of ensuring the future of what have become great orchestras. The schools prom involves a range of ages and backgrounds. There is everything from full-scale, top-quality county youth orchestras to bands from local schools for children with special educational needs. Those children are showing what they can achieve—perhaps we should call them special educational achieving bands—and they are particularly moving. I seek to find ways to preserve and conserve those opportunities.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools has gone a long way towards seeking solutions. The hon. Lady referred to one letter about partnerships between maintained schools and grant-maintained schools, but, as he promised in Committee, he has looked further. On 4 February, in response to the points I raised, he referred to:

[Mr. Bowis]

"an issue that he and I might examine in the future—section 145 of the Local Government Act 1972."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 4 February 1993; c. 1374.]

I am grateful to him for looking into the matter. Indeed the Local Government Act 1972 does provide a way through. Section 145(1)(c) provides that it is possible for local authorities, as opposed to local education authorities, to make provisions within or outwith their own local authority area. I asked whether they could spend money on pupils from outside the local authority area. Section 145 makes it clear that they can, and paragraph (c) refers specifically to bands and orchestras and presumably applies to choirs.

Local government authorities are already looking for ways through. The London Schools Symphony orchestra has found a solution. The hon. Lady referred to Kent which has some 18 music centres and the local authority is liaising with the Association of Rural Music Schools. My hon. Friend has established the facts to find a way to ensure the future of the excellent provision of music in rural areas, and I understand that Berkshire has set up a charitable trust.

I have two worries. First, what incentive is there for local authorities to take over the responsibility hitherto undertaken by local education authorities? In many cases it is the same authority, and that will apply more often as we move towards unitary authorities, but there are understandable concerns that those facilities should not be lost in the transfer of responsibilities. It would be helpful if my hon. Friend spoke to Ministers with responsibilities for local government to see what recommendations, guidance or steering can be provided by the Department of the Environment as well as directly through LEAs to stress that central Government looks to local government to continue such provision.

Secondly, at present if a county youth orchestra is set up and maintained by the county education committee schools can send students to play in the orchestra if they meet the required standard. I am concerned to ensure that there will be nothing to stop that continuing and that grant-maintained schools will be able to send pupils to participate. However, there is an implication that there will be some requirement on those schools to contribute towards the cost of the county youth orchestra in future. I am not yet convinced that those schools will have sufficient incentive to contribute to the county youth orchestra, particularly in a year when they have no students playing in the orchestra or band.

I ask my hon. Friend to continue to examine the issue as I know he has done in the past. I am grateful for the genuine way in which he has tackled the problems, but hon. Members on both sides of the House, the Government and local government and those in the world of music must get it right because it is a precious asset in our cultural heritage.

7 pm

Ms. Armstrong: As I was not a member of the Standing Committee, I intervene in the debate with some trepidation. I realise that hon. Members who were on the Committee are anxious to take part. However, I should like to make a brief contribution about the music service in Durham, as my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) referred to the work that the library service does for schools in the county.

I have a group of children coming to London tomorrow to present a petition at 10 Downing street. The petition relates to their concern and that of their parents about the future of the music service in Durham. They realise that if the service is under threat there, it is under threat elsewhere, and they want to ensure that it is maintained.

I admire the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) for talking about progress and development and I wish to goodness that serious thought were being given to those aspects. A great deal is threatened with destruction and must first be protected if we are to secure progress and development. If we cannot preserve what we have, we shall not be able to extend good practice and high quality. That distresses me.

We are told repeatedly that the Government are concerned about standards, yet when we have something of high quality they are content to ride rough-shod over it, such is their fixation that education should be dominated by market principles. Many hon. Members may not realise how difficult it is to run an orchestra on the basis simply of upholding individualism. The attitude that it is the individual that matters—and whether individual schools buy in—affects the ability of an orchestra and its members to work together. It may seem simplistic to say so, but we have to use simplistic language if we are to get Ministers to listen and to think about anything.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools visited the Durham music service in October. I am told that he was quite impressed and commended the work that was being done. A few weeks later I was at the school proms in the Royal Albert hall. Apart from anything else, that is an extremely enjoyable occasion, and for Members of Parliament such events are very few and far between these days. I wish that some Ministers had found time to attend. I understand that no Minister was present at the event last year or was able to go to the Festival hall this year or last. That demonstrates that Ministers are afraid to expose themselves to such quality experience. In their heart of hearts, they know that what they are doing threatens quality. Many people support what is currently being done by the music service. One is Eric Bolton, recently a chief inspector, and others have been mentioned.

I want to refer to some wider educational aspects. The Government seem to have lost sight of what education is about. It is not simply about the three Rs. It is true that if children do not acquire a grasp of the three Rs, many other things remain outside their understanding, but if education were about the three Rs only, we should have a very narrow and stultified group of young people emerging from the system. Music is one area in which many otherwise ordinary children excel. I have received from constituents letters indicating that they did not realise that their children had such qualities, as music was not important in their families. But many children have found ways of expressing talent and have become high flyers through music. The Government are putting that at risk.

In Durham, no one is expressing any interest in opted-out, grant-maintained schools. However, if such a development were to occur it would threaten the overall provision that the authority is able to make. In my constituency there are very small rural schools with only two or three teachers. The children there benefit from the

peripatetic music service. They have access to instruments and are able to go to group music sessions, leading to participation in county orchestras and bands. What the Government are doing will remove choice. Those children will be deprived of the opportunity of such involvement.

But it is more than a question of simple involvement in music. Children in very small schools may have exceptional talent. How are they to be given an opportunity to work and play with others of similar ability? That can be done only if the county is able to make the appropriate provision. If the Government honestly want to empower authorities, why are they removing the means whereby pupils can be enabled to participate on a wider basis? Why are the Government determined to remove that power?

There is no logic in the Government's attitude. The Minister knows that there are ways of maintaining this provision; but that would involve the enabling of local education authorities. The Government do not want to allow that, so they are adopting this vindictive attitude. We have heard a great deal about children and young people getting involved in nasty activities. Mr. Paul Haworth, a parent from the village in which my parents live, has written to me:

"At a time when there is increasing concern about rising levels of crime and lawlessness among young people, it is short-sighted to take measures which could deprive many young people of the opportunity to take part in constructive activities which could not only enrich their own lives but also those of others. Where are future musicians to come from? Presumably, as a nation, we wish to have quality orchestras in the future. My own son is coming to the end of his school career but is willing to pass on his knowledge and expertise by helping younger musicians at his school. He does not get paid for this; it costs the school nothing; It costs the county nothing. It is one of those invisible spin-offs which do not appear on a balance sheet. Similar things happen in many schools. They cost nothing but have tremendous value. The present obsession with budgets and costs will destroy many valuable activities, but at the end of the day we will all count the cost."

I hope that the Minister will listen. I realise that he will not accept the new clause. Indeed, it is beyond the ability of the Government to accept anything that the Opposition put forward. However, I hope that the Minister will at least have the humility to accept that the Government have got it wrong this time. They have been unable to assure people that services such as music and libraries, particularly in counties like mine, where schools are often dispersed widely across the countryside, will be preserved. The children in small rural schools must be offered the same opportunities as are available to those in large, grant-maintained schools. They deserve our attention. The Minister has an obligation to secure for them the future of the peripatetic music service and other such services. I hope that, despite the Government's ideological approach, the Minister will agree to the introduction, in another place, of provisions to secure the future of the peripatetic music service in the county of Durham.

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I add my voice to those heard tonight expressing anxiety about the future of the music service. I agree entirely with the concerns expressed by the hon. Members for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong).

I speak as a London hon. Member who has experience of the extraordinarily good work of the Centre for Young Musicians. It has provided truly excellent training and opportunities for London children from a variety of backgrounds to achieve extremely high standards. It has given them the experience of playing together in orchestras and bands. Only a fortnight ago I listened to a concert at the Blackheath concert halls given by three of the brass and wind ensembles of that organisation. They achieved remarkable standards. The house was packed and the occasion provided those children with important and valuable opportunities.

Skill of that quality is possible only because of co-operation between people over a wide area. The Centre for Young Musicians was a product of the Inner London education authority, which achieved considerable gains by bringing together people from throughout the London area to achieve what would not have been possible by the individual efforts of one borough.

When the ILEA was abolished, which many of us regretted bitterly, we felt that it was vital to retain the provision of bodies such as the Centre for Young Musicians. Lengthy negotiations took place, as a result of which a formula was established to allow that body to continue, with individual boroughs agreeing to meet the fees, along with a foundation for young musicians to provide financial support for the core services.

That worked for a while, but it is now under threat. Individual boroughs, including my borough of Greenwich, the budgets of which are threatened by the pressures on their standard spending assessments and the Government's capping legislation, have been forced to withdraw funding. That is proving a tragedy for many children in those areas. Other boroughs are again examining their funding of the Centre for Young Musicians. In Greenwich, other music projects have been put at risk as a result of budget cuts. No individual borough in London could possibly sustain the activity necessary to achieve the standards that have been achieved by the Centre for Young Musicians. If that is true for a borough, it is all the more true for individual schools.

We are witnessing the risk of fragmentation. One does not know how many schools will opt for grant-maintained status. There are few in those parts of London with which I am familiar. In other areas—for example, in the London borough of Wandsworth and a few others—a significant number have opted in favour. In Greenwich, little interest in the option has as yet been expressed by schools. But if the option develops and schools are taken outside the normal ambit of the local education authority so that they cannot opt into the joint provision of music service in a borough framework, the fragmentation of which I spoke will become more serious.

That will put at risk the continuation of the high standards that have been achieved and which hon. Members in all parts of the House have emphasised. All have said that high quality has been achieved and is at risk. So it is vital for the Government to listen to the voices that are being raised. They must think again about the matter.

I hope that the Government will accept the new clause, which would provide a framework within which individual authorities could continue to provide music and library services to schools, be they grant maintained or otherwise. The clause would be logical, it would avoid the fragmentation to which I referred and it would help to maintain the unified service and the high quality of music education that has been achieved. But even if the Government will not accept the new clause, I hope that

[Mr. Nick Raynsford]

they will think again about the implications for music education, not only in London, but throughout Britain, if that process of fragmentation is allowed to proceed.

In his White Paper which preceded the Bill, the Minister chose, rather curiously, to quote from John Ruskin's "Unto This Last". One of the most memorable phrases in that work—I fancy that it is not a quotation that the Secretary of State would wish to hear—runs:

"Government and co-operation are in all things the laws of life; anarchy and competition, the laws of death."

Co-operation in music has been the basis of achieving high standards in musical education. It is to be hoped that the Government will accept that continued co-operation on a wide scale, rather than anarchy and fragmentation, are the way forward. Otherwise, that high-quality service will be put at risk.

7.15 pm

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), I was not a member of the Committee, so I speak without the benefit of having been part of the discussion that preceded tonight's debate.

Coming to the debate afresh, I find it strange that a Government who claim to be committed to choice, competition and quality should be taking steps that will inhibit all of those. It will preclude choice for grant-maintained schools so that after two years they will not be able to choose from where they buy their services. What the Government propose will make it impossible for local authority library and music services to compete with the schemes and companies that are already being set up.

The Government say that they are keen on local authorities going into the market place and competing and trading. The Bill as drafted will prevent local authority services from trading their services to grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: No.

Mr. Fisher: The Minister disputes what I say?

Mr. Forth: It is precisely because the Government are not keen on local authorities trading that the whole provision exists. The hon. Gentleman has it the wrong way round.

Mr. Fisher: The Government are keen on competitive tendering by local authorities.

Mr. Forth: That is not the same thing.

Mr. Fisher: Perhaps I should have referred to certain sorts of trading and various types of competing in the market place being considered desirable by the Government. If the Minister believes that the plural provision of music and library services is good, he is denying the sense of that by what he is proposing. Looking at the provision from the point of view of the Government, I am baffled. I do not understand their rationale. I trust the Minister will explain it when he replies to the debate.

I join other hon. Members in paying tribute to Larry Westland. Most contributions to the debate have been about music services, and we are agreed that Mr. Westland has performed a superb service for the quality of music education and the enjoyment of music for 20 years or more. I join the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) in saying that going to the schools' proms and musical events at the South Bank and the Albert hall are among the most moving and enjoyable musical experiences. It is remarkably exciting to see such a range of young musicians achieving high standards and coming together to express their excitement.

We are speaking of children who in many cases have not been great achievers academically. They find in music a subject in which they can communicate well with others. The excitement of that communication comes across like electricity in their concerts at the Albert hall and the South Bank. If the Minister joins us in paying tribute to Mr. Westland—the country owes a considerable debt to him—he should heed Mr. Westland's warning, given from his experience of more than 20 years of working with young people and music, that the action of the Government in this matter is profoundly wrong. It puts at risk something that is extremely precious and probably, in European terms, unique about our education service. We have provided in Great Britain a quality of music education that is the envy of every other country. People come from all over the world—I am sure that the Minister understands this—to talk to music advisers in local authorities, to hear the music in our schools and to go to concerts like Mr. Westland's. They come here because of the traditions that have been built up.

As the hon. Member for Battesea (Mr. Bowis) said, geographically throughout the country there is still somewhat patchy provision, as indeed there is in every hon. Member's constituency. It is one of the most baffling and worrying aspects of education in each of our constituencies that one can go to one school in one constituency and find wonderful music education, everybody playing an instrument, very good singing, and excitement and a buzz in the air; then one goes to a school half a mile away in the same catchment area, and therefore the same range of natural ability in children, and almost nothing is happening. So the patchiness of provision is not only geographic, but also within each constituency.

That should give us cause for concern, but it should not distract us from the essential point that music education in this country is superb. It Mr. Westland is right, that we are putting it at risk with what the Government are doing, surely the Government ought to pause for thought. Surely they should talk more to people in both the public and the private sector in music, people like Mr. Westland and people in professional music as well, to see whether they are acting wisely.

Certainly, from what Mr. Westland has said and from what has been said on both sides of the House in this debate, there is a fear that what the Government are doing is a threat to the quality of teaching in grant-maintained schools as much as in other schools, and to the music services that local authorities provide. With that two-pronged threat, there will be a threat to music education generally.

The other thing that strikes me as curious about what the Government are doing is that it seems to be at odds with their own desire for music education in the national curriculum. Many of the provisions in the national curriculum are extremely good and should be applauded; they will add to the quality of music education.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) pointed out that the basic music education

required between the ages of five and 14 does not include specialist instrumental or singing teaching. I regret that, and believe that it is a weakness in the national curriculum.

What the national curriculum does require, particularly at key stage 2, is a lot of specialised knowledge of music. It requires the teaching of notation and composing; it requires a quality of listening and appreciation of music that is really quite specialised and cannot be provided by just any teacher. The Minister would not fancy his hand at teaching a group of young children at key stage 2 ostinato, or to appreciate Stravinsky on the one hand and reggae on the other.

What the Minister, quite rightly, is asking for in the basic music education in the national curriculum is some quite specialist skills and knowledge, specialist music teaching. Yet he must understand that the Government's proposal would have the effect of cutting back on specialised music teaching, both peripatetic and through the music services and music advisers. So here we have, on the one hand, the Government rather admirably wanting very specialist knowledge to be taught to our children, yet, on the other hand, taking action that will drive out specialist music teaching, both through music services and in schools. There seems to be a contradiction there.

The Minister may say in his reply that this can all be addressed through enhanced in-service training. He will probably refer to such things as the Reading consultancy service, which are beginning to get off the ground and will certainly improve the quality of teaching of non-specialist music teachers. But he knows that they cannot, by themselves, fulfil the needs or develop the full potential of the basic music education in the national curriculum. There is a contradiction which the Minister really ought to address.

I am sure that the Minister knows that the quality of the music services that my hon. Friends and I are seeking to preserve is dependent on the quality of the music advisers. I believe that this view is shared by hon. Members on both sides of the House, and I join the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) in paying tribute to the service there, which I am sure is replicated in many other constituencies. Yet, as the Minister will know, the music advisers national association did a survey at the end of last year which showed in the last three months of that year that the threat of this action by the Government and of other cuts in local authority education services meant that, out of 108 music advisers in the country, 17 lost their jobs—roughly 15 per cent.—and that they will not be the last to lose their jobs. So the very people who provide the specialist skills are leaving the service.

The Minister will also know, having done his homework, that the United Kingdom Council for Music Education and Training, too, did a survey last year. It suggested that, if what the Government are seeking to do tonight becomes law, only 12 per cent. of local education authorities plan to keep a full music service going. That cannot be right if the Minister shares the applause and congratulations on the quality of music teaching; something surely is wrong.

We should not be talking about clinging on to the quality of our service. This debate should be about improving it, getting more music teachers, more support in schools, more professional musicians into schools, and more children leaving the classroom to experience a concert. How can we say that we have a comprehensive education in this country when so many children leave school at 16 never having had the opportunity to hear live music in a concert hall? That does not seem to me to be a comprehensive education. That is the debate that we ought to be having tonight. Instead, we are scrabbling around trying to persuade the Minister not to destroy something which is a jewel of the British education service.

Most of the debate tonight has been on music education, but I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West spoke about school libraries. Surely there can be agreement on both sides of the House about the importance of books and libraries for education. Indeed, the idea of an education service without libraries, without books, is a contradiction in terms.

However, the Minister knows that the pressure on local authority finances in recent years has meant that on the whole schools have been buying fewer books and that the books that are on the shelves are old and out of date. When the Labour party did a survey 18 months ago of school library provision, we were literally flooded by examples from school libraries all over the country which had books on the shelves that were 30, 40, 50, or 60 years out of date. There were books about the British empire, with the wrong maps; and one book said that radio was the technology of the future. That was on the science shelf of a secondary school. They might seem rather laughable examples, but there is something wrong with school libraries when they have such out-of-date books for teaching our children which have not been weeded out and replaced by the best.

The Minister should know that four out of five schools have fewer than the 10 books per pupil recommended by Her Majesty's inspectors. Of course, the Government will not have the benefit of HMIs' advice in future, but, while they have it, they ought to take that professional advice and agree that 10 books per pupil is not a reasonable aim for a school and a school library. I cannot believe that the Minister will disagree with that. But four out of five schools in all our constituencies do not have 10 books per pupil. Only one school in four nationally has a library policy. Hon. Members may not realise that children in their constituencies are going to schools that do not have a policy about how to develop the library services that are the core of their constituents' children's education.

Schools spend on average less than one third of the level per pupil recommended by Her Majesty's inspectorate. Less than one school in five has a qualified librarian. Far from being like music, in which we have a glorious tradition, our library services are buckling and sagging, and the Government are likely to make a bad situation worse through the Bill.

As school libraries decline, the need for school library services becomes more acute. If the picture painted by Her Majesty's inspectorate is correct—and it is—that service and the common share provision is the only thing saving children's access to books. The Minister is putting that service at risk.

As with the music debate, we should not be talking about trying to salvage a school library service. The Minister should be considering the existing superb library services—I am sure that he is—that are often in Conservative-controlled or non-Labour-controlled authorities such as Hertfordshire, which has possibly the best school library service in the country. I am sure that he has visited it. If he has, he will realise that it is a credit and an enhancement to education in Hertfordshire, and there are other success stories.

7.30 pm

We should be setting such standards everywhere. Every school should have a library, which should be open throughout the school day. Every library should be adequately staffed by qualified librarians, and every local education authority should have a school library service.

Those remarks should be totally uncontentious and should be endorsed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, but the Government seem deaf to such common sense. As I understand it, through the Bill, the Government are seeking to destroy the library and music services and they could be saved from doing so if they accepted new clause 1. The music service is a jewel of our education system, and the library service is absolutely essential, but is in a bad state of repair. Both need support and succour from the Government, but they are getting damage and neglect. That cannot be right, and I beg the Minister to think again.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to intervene, if only briefly.

The comments of the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) do not bear closely on my experience of my constituency where, in the brief time that I have been associated with the schools, I have found an excellent music and library tradition. Some of the primary schools have taken their choirs to the United States and to Poland and some of the other schools regularly co-operate with one another. For example, all the schools have got together to fund the purchase of an Indonesian instrument, whose name escapes me—it is a series of amazing drums, and sounds almost West Indian. All the senior schools use the instrument—if someone could possibly feed me with its name I should be exceedingly grateful.

It is heart-warming to hear the music made in both senior and junior schools in Hastings.

Ms. Armstrong: As I understand it, East Sussex, which is the authority, has a good music service and that is precisely what we are trying to preserve through the new clause.

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong) has not given my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) the name of the instrument.

Mrs. Lait: Yes, my hon. Friend reminds me that I was grasping for the name of the instrument.

Some hon. Members in the Chamber know that I have been critical of East Sussex, but I do not deny that its music and library services are of a high standard.

I do not think that music teaching and the library service in schools will be less good merely because the local education authority no longer has over-arching control. The Bill would free teachers and pupils to make their own decisions, because if they go grant maintained they will have the budget to make decisions about the sort of music that they wish to provide.

I agree with the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central that music provision is patchy, but head teachers are the key. If a teacher is exceedingly interested in music, the school will provide a wonderful music service, but one tends to find that if the head teacher is less interested in music, the school is less likely to provide the quality of music teaching to be found in some other schools.

I accept that many pupils demonstrate a skill that one would not necessarily expect. Once the head teacher and the teaching staff have control of their budgets and pupils have shown signs of interest, we can provide a superb music service. Under the new system we shall continue to do so.

I confess that I am impressed at the quality of the library service in my constituency—the space, the number of books and how modern they are. I suggest that if we are looking for 60-year-old books in school libraries, we might look to see whether they are first editions and therefore of some value, as they could be sold to buy the more modern and up-to-date books that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central seems to recommend.

Mr. Clappison: Such as an Indonesian dictionary.

Mrs. Lait: Yes, I agree.

The fundamental argument is that when schools have control over the totality of their budgets there will be no reason why they cannot buy in services, nor will there be any reason why schools that are deeply involved cannot sell such services, as that will not have to go through the local education authority.

Mr. Clappison: I welcome the opportunity to take part in this short debate and do so with some trepidation because I know of the great distinction that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) bring to the debate, with their knowledge of the arts and the authority with which they can speak on the subject.

I wish to contribute partly because of the remarks that the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central made about Hertfordshire. As he said, Hertfordshire has a tradition of excellence in its school library service, so the debate is of concern to my constituents. Hertfordshire also has excellent music provision. Those services are of great interest to schools, teachers, pupils and parents in Hertfordshire, and they will look for a continuation of that tradition of excellence.

The question of provision has a greater urgency in many Hertfordshire schools because they are moving rapidly towards grant-maintained status. Five schools in my constituency have recently balloted and each has opted, by a large majority, for such status. The Hertfordshire tradition of excellence in music and library provision is represented in those schools and they will be greatly interested in the debate. I have listened carefully to the debate. Opposition Members in particular have spoken with great feeling on the subject. I look for an assurance from Ministers about the position of library and music services.

As I listened to the debate, I remembered what was said in Committee when we considered the provision of services by LEAs. Similar points have been raised in both debates, but I am not as pessimistic as Opposition Members are about the alternative provision of supply. I do not believe that experience in other areas has shown that the independent sector is inadequate or unenterprising in making alternative provision. In the future I look for

diversity and enterprise in the provision of music and library services. There is a great deal to be gained from that.

I have sought to put the debate in the context of a more general one about the provision of local authority services. I have listened with interest to what has been said about the provision of music and library services.

Mr. Forth: With the indulgence of the House, I shall start by moving amendment No. 126, as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, would expect.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. No, I would not. Moving the amendment comes later.

Mr. Forth: I am most relieved, as that means that I can spend more time answering the debate.

What is somewhat depressing about this debate—like that in the Committee—is the negative attitude that prevails on the Opposition Benches, which is contrasted by the more positive attitude displayed by my hon. Friends. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) on his long-standing interest in these matters. He was kind enough to acknowledge that he and I have considered this issue and, although I have not been able to satisfy my hon. Friend completely, I am sure that he will agree that the problems that he envisaged are not as great as he originally thought. The views expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Hastings and Rye (Mrs. Lait) and for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) reflected that positiveness.

Contrast that with the views expressed by the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong), who said that only the county can enable joint and co-operative provision in the supply of music services. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) suggested that a plural provision—an interesting term, I thought—would somehow be denied by the measures in the Bill, which the new clause seeks to amend. I hope to demonstrate that nothing could be further from the truth.

One of the other ironies of the debate is that Opposition Members have been at pains to point out the inadequacy of some of the existing provision, but that provision is made by the very LEAs that they argue should continue to have some sort of monopolistic control over the provision of music and library services.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central spoke about the inadequacy of school library books stock, a concern which was echoed by his hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg). It is difficult to argue that one must hold on to the existing provision, because anything else will be fatally damaging, while arguing, almost in the same breath, that that existing provision is somehow inadequate. I am at a loss to square those two arguments, as was the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central.

Mr. Fisher: Perhaps I can help the Minister to understand my point. Because school libraries have been so run down in recent years, the school library service—the common provision across an authority to which all school libraries can turn to bolster their stock—is essential. The Minister has threatened the existence of the school library service.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful for that clarification and I shall deal with that point later.

It is important to recall that whatever threat the Opposition may see and my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) envisages is not immediate and its effect will not be uniform across the country. The choice is not as stark as has been portrayed. An alternative provision of services will be considered only when LEAs start to reach and exceed the margin of capacity of their provision—that will occur only when a significant number of their schools have decided to become grant maintained. That decision will be taken by schools in the full knowledge of what independence means.

I accept what my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South said. If parents decide that relying on the continuance of LEA provision of the kind to which their school is accustomed is of paramount importance to them, perhaps that school is not the right sort to become grant maintained. If, on the other hand, a school is ready to accept the independence, responsibilities and the funding regime that come with grant-maintained status, and it can contemplate looking more widely for the provision of services, it can go forward with confidence. I shall cite examples of schools that have done just that.

7.45 pm

Mr. Cormack: I must make it plain that I merely said that that was a factor in certain recent decisions that I personally regretted. I believe that those schools would be better if they were not left as they are, as do many of the parents. If their anxieties could be stilled on this particular point, I suspect that a lot of them would vote in a different way.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, for that is precisely the argument that I want to make.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: I wonder whether the Minister is aware of a little booklet entitled "Education for the Next Century", which the Government have placed in most public libraries and which has the approval of the Plain English Campaign. It says about grant-maintained schools:

"LEAs can offer services to GM schools where there is a need for them and the schools can buy from the LEA or elsewhere."

Many parents will have read that document and will be totally unaware that if their school does become grant maintained it will be unable, once the LEA has gone beyond the margin that the Minister has mentioned, to buy services from that LEA. Can the Minister make a definitive statement about that, so that the position is absolutely clear?

Mr. Forth: I shall certainly look at the wording of the publication to which the hon. Lady referred. It is somewhat at odds with the argument made by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South, who suggested that parents were being scared by the thought that they would no longer be able to look to their LEA for those services. The hon. Lady is suggesting that, somehow, they are being conned into believing that they can get those services from the LEA. We cannot have it both ways and the matter must be resolved one way or the other. I shall look at that publication.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: The Minister will be aware that under an amendment to clause 25 the Secretary of State has taken powers to declare ballots void if he believes that misleading information has been presented to parents for

[Mrs. Ann Taylor]

a grant-maintained ballot. If the circumstances surrounding the supply of services to grant-maintained schools became an issue in a ballot, what would the Minister consider to be misleading information—that given by his hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) or that quoted in the booklet?

Mr. Forth: I shall look at the wording in that publication to see whether it is in any way misleading.

As I said a few moments ago, one of the problems with this debate is that none of us can be specific about the point at which the margin of capacity of a particular LEA may be reached and, therefore, when the restrictions on its trading powers and provision of services to grant-maintained schools may be reached. That will vary authority by authority, it will vary over time and it will vary up and down the country.

The alternatives that are available to schools are numerous and I should like to come to the point rightly raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South. There is the option of co-operation between schools —co-operatives even—that seek to come together to make use of the funds made available to them either through the local management of their schools or grant-maintained status. They may seek to make joint provision for certain services. In the case of libraries, for example, if a school has its own library that is one matter, but primary schools may want to form themselves into consortia. Similarly, secondary schools may provide library services for their local primary schools. All those possibilities can be explored. Local authority public libraries might find ways in which they could make provisions available to local schools on a much more broadly defined basis. The margin of capacity for a local authority, as a whole, as opposed to a local education authority, tends to be wider and would allow the public library service to range more widely than normal.

There is a range of possibilities, but, at present, as we are in the relatively early stage of development, those possibilities have not yet been fully explored or come to full fruition. I shall give examples of where the possibilities have been explored.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: May I remind the Minister of what he said during our debate on the subject in Committee on 4 February—*Hansard*, column 1373? He said that local authorities should not be able to offer services to grant-maintained schools because they were "non-profit-accountable bodies." Is the Minister saying that he will allow grant-maintained schools to trade with each other? If so, is he saying that they are profit-accountable bodies and one of their main purposes should be to trade with other schools in their region? What is the difference between one publicly funded organisation—a local authority—providing the services and another publicly funded organisation—a grant-maintained school—doing so?

Mr. Forth: I think that the hon. Lady is making slightly heavy weather of the issue. There is nothing to stop schools using their funds for educational purposes, which is what the funds are for. If the schools believe that by joint activity or co-operative activity or forming consortia for educational purposes they can achieve that end, I know of no inhibition on them.

Mr. Steinberg: I do not believe that the Minister understands what a resource centre is. He is talking about using a public library. Does he realise that a resource centre provides all the facilities that I mentioned earlier, such as projects and history objects, which a public library does not hold centrally? Such provisions are specifically held by learning resource centres. It is impossible for a central library or local library to hold objects that schools can borrow. They are held only by the local education authority. I believe that the Minister does not understand the difference between a central public library and a learning resource centre.

Mr. Forth: I know that it is difficult for the hon. Gentleman to expand his mind beyond what is at present. We have sat through 140 hours of debate in Committee, so I know that Opposition Members are profoundly conservative. In normal circumstances, I might welcome that. But the fact that Opposition Members cannot get their minds beyond what is at present and cannot imagine anything other than a local education authority providing anything is bedeviling the debate. The Government are suggesting that it is highly likely that given the fact that we are now liberating schools, their governors, head teachers and everyone else involved—through a combination of delegated budgets and local management of schools and the possibility of grant-maintained status—they can make decisions about their priorities and how they use their funds.

Mr. Steinberg *rose*——

Mr. Forth: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman, but if his intervention is as long as his previous one, it will be the last time that I give way.

Mr. Steinberg: Does not the Minister realise that he is talking about liberating schools, but saying that they cannot purchase from a local education authority? Where is the liberation in that?

Mr. Forth: The liberation comes from the fact that schools can look to other provision which is now beginning to materialise. Examples of LEAs that are looking to trusts to provide music services include those in Kirklees, Kent, Berkshire, East Sussex and Derbyshire. That trust status would be an interim stage towards the fully independent provision of the services that we believe that schools will want to consider.

I can give a number of examples of grant-maintained schools that are already purchasing catering, payroll, music, legal, architectural, cleaning, catering, auditing, outdoor education and ground maintenance services. I could continue with the list, but I think that those examples of grant-maintained schools purchasing such services—including music—will serve. In all those schools, music is included in the service. Some of them maintain that the provision that they are now able to purchase freely, and of their own choice and source, is better than the one that they used to obtain from the monopoly local education authority provider. That is what I mean by liberation, local decision making and local management using its resources.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give a concrete example of one service that is so much better than the ones that already exist?

Mr. Forth: I know of at least one school that claims that its provision is superior to that it had previously—[HON. MEMBERS: "Which one?"] If the House will bear with me, I hope to be able to give that example—*[Interruption.]*—I cannot find the example immediately, and shall come back to it in a moment, as I want to speak to my amendment before I sit down. *[Interruption.]*

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I think that the Minister has been given the information, so if he wishes to resume his speech, give us the name of the school and give way in a moment, I shall happily let him.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. The school is Bingley grammar school—*[Laughter.]* I do not know why hon. Members find it amusing.

Mr. Enright *rose*——

Mr. Forth: No, I shall not give way, as the hon. Gentleman must allow me to tell the House about Bingley grammar school. It claims to have tripled the interest in music for a better price since it has not received its music service from the local education authority. It now buys in peripatetic music teachers.

Mr. Enright: I was laughing because Leeds already gives an excellent service, which I doubt has been bettered by the purchases suggested by the Minister.

Mr. Forth: The hon. Gentleman can come to the Chamber as an apologist for Leeds, but, in answer to the question that I was posed, I am giving an example of a school that has demonstrated the principle that underlies the section of the Bill that we are discussing, and shows why the new clause is so misconceived. The example also partly answers the important question posed by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South.

There are growing numbers of grant-maintained schools that have demonstrated their capacity and capability to go to the hardly developed market place for services and purchase them to their satisfaction, competitively and with choice. That is a completely different approach from the monopolistic LEA-driven approach that previously existed. I concede straight away that it is different for people, who have the education of children at heart and who have known only local education authority provision all their lives, to see beyond that. Even at this early stage, long before we have reached margins of capacity and the provisions begin to bite, we see encouraging examples of schools that are able to obtain library and music provision to their satisfaction from the marketplace.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: I think that I am right in saying that Bingley is unique in another aspect: it is the one grant-maintained school that has applied to take out a mortgage. I do not know what the connection is there—perhaps it is to pay for the music. I hope that the Minister will respond to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Durham, North-West (Ms. Armstrong). Small schools, where the marginal cost of the provision of music lessons is excessive, may find themselves excluded from the sort of provision that the Minister mentioned. Will the Minister read new clause 1, which states that the local authority may provide those services and the grant-maintained schools may buy them? No one is forcing either the local authority to provide the service or the grant-maintained school to pay for it. That option should be available both to the local authority and the grant-maintained school—to use the Minister's word, it is "liberating".

Mr. Forth: As long as local education authorities are allowed to continue to make that provision, it is most unlikely that others will be able to come in or provide an adequate alternative—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."]

As a courtesy to the House, I will explain amendment No. 126. Its purpose is to allow LEAs in prescribed circumstances to charge grant-maintained schools for such services. If a GM school decides to use a particular LEA-provided support service, it is reasonable for the school to pay for that service if it is already funded to do so.

To deny LEAs the opportunity to charge would mean that grant-maintained schools would otherwise be double funded—money being given to the school on the one hand but the service being provided free on the other. In effect, and as important, that would choke off the development of a free market in such services, since alternative suppliers could not compete. We shall of course consult widely on the necessary regulations.

I hope that the House will accept that the Government amendment is entirely reasonable, is very much within the spirit of the Bill, and will enable local education authorities to charge where it is necessary to do so, to avoid double counting.

It being Eight o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 238, Noes 275.

Division No. 165] **[8 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cleiland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew

Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and Mr. Robert C. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 1

FUNDING AGENCY FOR SCHOOLS

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I beg to move amendment No. 181, in page 1, leave out lines 12 to 14 and insert

'The Secretary of State shall by order appoint not less than ten nor more than fifteen persons to be the members of the agency, of whom one he shall appoint as Chairman'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this we may take the following amendments: No. 183, in page 1, line 25, at end insert—

'(5) Any order under this section shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament'.

No. 38, in clause 2, page 2, line 7, at end add

'; and the names of those whom the Secretary of State proposes to appoint shall be submitted to the Welsh Affairs Committee of the House of Commons which may report thereon.'.

Mr. Lloyd: I welcome the Secretary of State's return to our proceedings: it is a rare treat to see him in the Chamber to observe our deliberations on the main part of the Bill. As it is his own Bill, he is more than welcome.

Amendment No. 181 concerns what the Secretary of State recently described on television as the A-word—in this case, the arrogance of the Secretary of State. The amendment asks whether a check should be placed on such arrogance, in the form of parliamentary scrutiny.

Throughout the Bill's Committee stage, the Secretary of State was not prepared to put himself to the test of accountability—least of all to Parliament, and, through Parliament, to the general public. The purpose of amendments Nos. 181 and 183 is to ensure that, once the Secretary of State has decided on the names of the 10 to 15 persons who are to be members of the funding agency, and on the chairman's name, the list of names will be submitted to the scrutiny of the House. That is reasonable in itself, but it is particularly reasonable in view of the many lessons that we still have to learn about the opting-out process.

We know that the information on which opting-out decisions are made is changing on a fairly regular basis as the Government change their mind about which bribes to offer those whom they wish to persuade. A number of such bribes have been offered to certain schools recently—bribes which, although they are up front at the point at which opting out is under consideration, have been rapidly withdrawn when it has already taken place. Schools that have opted out are beginning to find themselves in crisis.

8.15 pm

The Government are concerned enough about the failure of the process for their tone to become more and more strident, and their apologists are finding it necessary to make increasingly extreme statements. I am delighted to see that the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) is present. He and I have engaged in a brief discussion about a recent article in *The Birmingham Post*. As an apologist for the Government's opting-out policy, the hon. Gentleman accused Conservative-controlled Hereford and Worcester county council of all manner of unpleasant things: in particular, he said that the council had engaged in a dirty tricks campaign to prevent the opting out of the Nunnery Wood secondary school, which in fact voted against the whole concept of removing itself from LEA involvement.

The hon. Gentleman's remarks drew an almost immediate response from the Conservative chairman of the county's education committee, Dr. David Moffett. He described the hon. Gentleman's comments as "intemperate and snide"—extreme comments, given that they came from a member of the hon. Gentleman's party. Dr. Moffett went on to launch an astonishing onslaught on the hon. Gentleman, saying that his was

"an unworthy attack made by an ignorant man totally out of touch with the views of the overwhelming majority of those constituents who were involved."

I think that it was grossly unfair of Dr. Moffett to single out the hon. Member for Worcester. It is obvious that the hon. Gentleman was acting merely as the voice—the poodle, or lapdog—of the Ministers who are really responsible for the total lack of contact with constituents. It is they who are completely out of touch with not only the hon. Gentleman's constituents, but with constituents throughout the country.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for indicating his intention to mention me in his speech. I suspect, however, that he is not fully informed of the situation relating to Hereford and Worcester county council, and Nunnery Wood high school in particular; I also suspect that he is unaware of the totally misleading campaign involving literature put out by Dr. Moffett and the education authority, which I rightly criticised.

Dr. Moffett's attack on me may owe more to the fact that he is losing the argument in the county. Only today, I received a letter from my noble Friend Baroness Blatch, informing me that the Blessed Edward Oldcorne Roman Catholic high school in Hereford and Worcester had had its application for grant-maintained status approved. That is probably at the root of Dr. Moffett's concern.

Mr. Lloyd: It would not be fair for me to become over-involved in the domestic policy of the Conservative party. If Dr. Moffett is wrong—and the hon. Gentleman is not an ignorant man—I am prepared to listen to evidence to that effect over the weeks, months or years during which he may remain in the House. I look forward with interest to any evidence that he is in touch with his constituents; Dr. Moffett's view suggests the opposite. However, it is not only the Dr. Moffetts in the Conservative party who are very worried about the opting-out process and, especially, about the centralisation process implied in opting out and the funding agency.

In a previous debate, the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) made it clear to the Minister in an almost throwaway remark—it was noticeable that the Under-Secretary of State for Schools declined to respond to him—that the funding agency is a centralising measure. I believe that his words mirror part of mainstream Conservative thinking.

Conservative Members might want to leap to their feet to say that the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South is not representative of mainstream Conservative thinking, but as no Conservative Member is rising, I can assume only that his view—that it is a centralising measure—is also their view. The hon. Member for Worcester is indicating dissent but we know that, when all is said and done, he is already condemned out of the mouth of the chairman of the Conservative Worcester and Hereford education committee.

It is worth quoting again the words of Dimitri Coryton, the close friend of the Minister and the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). He actively campaigned for the Conservative party during the previous general election, once on the Prime Minister's bus. It was the same Dimitri Coryton of the Conservative Education Association who said of the White Paper:

"The Government's present emphasis on GM schools, however, is something we have grave doubts about . . . in effect, the Government is nationalising the schools of England and Wales . . . We believe that it represents a massive and dangerous increase in the power given to central government . . . All that will happen is the replacement of LEAs with a far larger, more bureaucratic and less accountable national education authority".

Those are not the words of disinterested neutrals; they come from the very heart of the Conservative party.

This is a nationalising Secretary of State, who gives us little lectures and homilies about the modernising process within the Labour party. The tendency within the Conservative party to centralisation and nationalisation has been evident during the past 14 years, during which time we have witnessed the very failures about which the Secretary of State sometimes exercises himself. As an old lag in the Government, the present Secretary of State has once again been caught with his political fingers in the till by a number of bodies who, on other occasions, could be regarded as supporters of the grant-maintained principle.

As far as I am aware, the Association of Heads of Grant Maintained Schools has not changed its views. Before the Committee stage, it said that it found it difficult to accept the

"total inconsistency between the powers proposed for the FAS . . . and the earlier assurances of the greater autonomy and accountability of schools".

The Church of England also made its views known. It said:

"We note that the Funding Agency will assume responsibilities for strategic planning but feel that the White Paper is somewhat light in indicating how this will work out in practice and, in particular, in explaining how the Funding Agency will relate to the other bodies that will be involved in this activity".

Those bodies were cited in Committee, but it is worth repeating their comments. Although he attended every sitting, unlike the Secretary of State, and took genuine pains to try to explain it, the Minister did not explain satisfactorily even to his own Back Benchers how the contradictions and confusion in the Bill would work out in practice.

The Funding Agency for Schools is a centralising measure. That form of centralisation runs through the White Paper. We are assured that the Secretary of State was the author of the White Paper, so he wrote that the funding agency will have powers for quality assurance in schools. It is a massive step towards centralisation for a body consisting of only 15 members to exercise quality from the centre.

The funding agency is to take on the duty of securing adequate places and will have to accept the duty of closing schools. That responsibility is inevitable because of falling rolls in some areas. Where there are falling rolls, the Secretary of State's personal funding agency will find it difficult to make decisions from the centre. Such centralisation has so far persuaded a considerable number of authorities and outside commentators and, indeed, a considerable number of those involved even in the opting-out process that the whole system is fraught with danger and difficulty, which is why there is increasing stridency and greater bribes from Ministers.

The *Cambridge Evening News* recently reported comments by the Under-Secretary of State. Perhaps he might like to comment now. He was reported as having told the governors of the Netherhall secondary school that it was more likely to get a new building if it opted out of local authority control. The Secretary of State is looking at the Under-Secretary with absolute amazement, as if he is confused and bewildered by the fact that the Under-Secretary would have the temerity to offer a bribe that he had not got round to offering. Does the Under-Secretary

want to leap to his feet and deny the newspaper story? It would be most helpful to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) if he were to place on record the fact that he disowns the story. However, perhaps he wishes to confirm that that particular bribe to Netherhall secondary school is on offer.

The Under-Secretary prayed in aid the Prime Minister. It is unusual for the Prime Minister to have any firm views—it is a case of "Will he, won't he?" and "What's the policy this week?" However, in this case, at that time the Prime Minister's view was that there was to be no level playing field. The Under-Secretary made it clear that he does not believe in level playing fields. He believes in backhanders here and the odd fudge there and keeping the concept of fairness for all young people out of schools.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: My hon. Friend might not be aware that this issue has caused considerable controversy in my constituency. I am sure that some parents, teachers and governors are anxious to get some word from the Secretary of State, or the Minister if he prefers, to find out precisely what was said to the head and chair of governors on that occasion. The onus is on the Minister to clarify that.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Let me make it clear that I am quite happy to allow the Minister or the Secretary of State to stand up. If the Secretary of State feels that it is necessary to disown the Minister, he should not feel embarrassed about coming to the Dispatch Box to do so because I will certainly give way to him. My hon. Friend will notice that there is a deafening silence. I know not what conclusions to draw. However, I know what conclusions I might draw if I were a parent—the promises issued at dead of night by Conservative central office in a press release are not worth the paper they are written on.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Lloyd: In the absence of the Minister, of course I shall give way to the hon. Lady. Is she answering for him?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am pointing out that that is exactly what happened in practice when Lancashire county council tried to stop Morecambe high school opting out, and also what happened to a school in my constituency when Lancashire county council gave it a sixth form for which it had been asking for 14 years. Just when it had a chance to opt out, it got its sixth form.

Mr. Lloyd: My colleagues are pointing out to me the fact that the Secretary of State must have approved that. If the Secretary of State is deliberately undermining the hon. Lady, I shall bring them together during the Division and insist that he gives her the answer that he is certainly not going to give to my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge. As one of his own, the hon. Lady at least is entitled to an explanation of why he gave that approval to that school. Is it not in the nature of the process?

Is this not the serious complaint we all have? The Government are intent on saying or doing anything in order to persuade schools to opt out and will come up with almost any argument or line that they think will be persuasive. We have a Minister—because I have not had an opportunity to warn him about this, I will not name him, but a letter exists and I shall make it available to anyone who doubts—who wrote unsolicited to the majority of school governors in his constituency. He wrote on House of Commons notepaper—I think he was probably in breach of the rules of the House, although that is something that others need to take up. He said:

> "As a school governor I hope that you will seriously consider whether your school is benefiting from local authority control."

He also wrote:

> "In order to combat the . . . council's spending cuts, many local schools have already sought their independence under grant maintained status. The next twelve months offers the opportunity for many schools to do likewise."

8.30 pm

The Minister, who is a spending Minister, does not mention that his own Department is making the same kind of cut. The Secretary of State can certainly see who it is if he wishes to take the matter up and rebuke his colleague. I am quite happy if he wishes to do that, but it is not my role to squeal on Ministers who are simply doing the bidding of their superiors in Cabinet.

The reality, when it comes to the crunch, is that the picture is very different. This is a message that the House has to understand. The Secretary of State's bribes, and even those uttered by the Secretary of State at his behest, do not add up to anything, because, time after time, we come across schools which have taken the little bit extra that has been offered and have then found themselves seriously disadvantaged. I will not quote an old case. Let me quote a new case, of Pate's——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am having a little difficulty in relating this to the amendment about the agency and the numbers and the decentralisation of that.

Mr. Lloyd: All will be revealed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All will be revealed. I am most grateful.

Mr. Lloyd: The point is that, so distrustful are we of the Secretary of State's word, we feel that it is necessary to have a body operating from the agency in whom Parliament can repose some trust which we cannot place in the Secretary of State. We need such people and can only have them and have faith in them if the parliamentary scrutiny of the appointments system takes place. The reason is that the promises that have been lavished on schools opting out have been so badly betrayed, as in the case of Pate's grammar school in Cheltenham.

That is one of those schools that opted out and had, even under the Government's recent league table, what is considered to be an excellent set of examination results. It had 98 per cent. of pupils taking GCSE examinations getting five or more A to C grades. It is a school that I think the Government would parade as one of their star achievers, but it has funding cuts of about £190,000, which it cannot make up by savings in funding. Apparently, it can find savings of £30,000 but will have to cut £160,000 or propose to parents that they accept making voluntary payments of £210 a year from each family to stave off that crisis. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I apologise for interrupting the hon. Member, but it is normal for meetings to be held outside the Chamber.

Mr. Lloyd: I am sure that the Minister often has a facility for ignoring his Back Benchers. I cannot seriously believe that he was listening to them. I think that his attention was almost certainly on the debate.

The point at issue in this school is that the head teacher, Mr. David Barnes, said:

"It's a dreadful shame that, because of cuts in income, the free grammar school that has been here for 400 years should have to ask parents to consider helping to fund the school." That is the reality of opting out. That is why we need——

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member's comments are completely irrelevant. The evidence is that schools choose to opt out for management control so that they can get decisions that will benefit their children; they do not opt out for financial reasons. I have the evidence to support what I say. I had a meeting of all the schools that had opted out in my constituency. All the secondary schools in my constituency opted out. They all say that they took that decision for management control and for that reason only.

Mr. Lloyd: It is not for me to comment on the circumstances of the hon. Member's constituency, except to ask why, if that is the case, it is necessary for Ministers to offer bribes to schools. Perhaps the hon. Member will join me in castigating his Ministers for offering this kind of crude financial bribery. Would he want to associate himself with that kind of comment? Can I couple him with the comments I have just made? He seems to be at something of a loss, not sure whether to play the honest Back Bencher which he is earnestly striving to do or the sycophantic lickspittle.

It will be interesting to see what happens when we come to the vote, but I understand that the hon. Member's local education authority is Conservative controlled. I have a similar problem, because one of the two authorities with which my constituency is concerned, Trafford, is also Conservative controlled. Trafford has boasted for many years of an education system second to none, and has castigated the city of Manchester for what it provided by way of education.

It is instructive that Labour-controlled Manchester LEA has faced only one opting-out ballot, and that was defeated, but Conservative-controlled Trafford has now had a number of ballots which will bring it to the magical 10 per cent. structure. The LEA, because of its incompetence in the past, as with the hon. Member's Conservative-controlled LEA, finds itself in a position where the public are saying, "Anything other than Conservative control; even faceless bureaucrats are better in some circumstances."

Dr. Spink: The hon. Member's comments continue to be irrelevant. First, I see the Minister not as offering bribes but as meeting the quite proper phasing-in and capital costs, so that parents show a very popular school. On the matter of my local education authority, the schools opting out of that control are not showing that they have any quarrel with that authority but that that authority has treated them well in the past and brought them to a state of maturity in which they can take control of their own affairs and deliver better education for their children.

Mr. Lloyd: I can only assume that that was written on the cuff of every Conservative MP who possesses cuffs, because it is straight out of the Conservative central office hand-out. "Brought to a state of maturity"—it is an interesting line, and a good one, but it does not explain why Ministers tell schools that they are more likely to get new buildings by opting out. It may not be a bribe in the hon. Member's terms, but it is an inducement or a sweetener in words that we can all agree upon as a compromise.

Dr. Spink: Anything that will induce schools to improve their standards is something that I support.

Mr. Lloyd: Of course it is, and that is what we should be having—a Bill that is really about improving standards for all our children, not just those in privileged little ghettos which suit the Secretary of State's ideology, but across the board in every LEA area so that there is proper access to decent high quality education that stretches them.

The reality is that this is so alien to the ideology of the present Government that we have this divisive piece of legislation—which is precisely why we say to the Secretary of State that it is so important that Parliament should have some control over the people who sit on his funding agency. I am aware that the Secretary of State will want to intervene in this debate to explain his own position on these matters.

Given the amount of centralisation implicit in the Bill and in the funding agency—that is the view not only of Labour Members and other Opposition Members but of people up and down the country, too—and given that many people are accusing the Secretary of State of a mindless centralisation that places dangerous powers in his hands, it is of critical importance that the House should have some control over the composition of the funding agency.

Throughout the debates on Second Reading and in Committee answers were not given about how the funding agency would operate, and whether the playing field would be so unfairly laid out that schools that wanted to stay within the LEA remit would be forced out. Answers were not given about how to resolve the confusion between the role of the funding agency as a provider of places and as a monitor of surpluses or shortages of places, and the role of the LEA in conjunction with it. In the not-too-distant future that situation will be the common one in a number of local authority areas in which there is joint control. Those answers have not been placed before Parliament.

For all those reasons, if we are not to be given answers during the passage of the Bill we must have some control over those whom the Secretary of State places in the funding agency. It is not good enough for the right hon. Gentleman to put the normal Tory place people there. Parliament should have the right to say that we want people of the highest possible calibre, in whom we can repose trust. The Government's track record shows us that, if the matter is left to the Secretary of State, we cannot possibly have that trust. Parliament must reserve the right to overrule the Secretary of State.

Mr. Pawsey: I did not intend to intervene in the debate, but I have been brought to my feet by the provocative comments made by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and his hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor).

One of the objects of the Bill is to make it easier for schools to apply for and receive grant-maintained status. Opposition Members have made clear their hostility to grant-maintained status. Indeed, the hon. Member for

Dewsbury has said that, were Labour ever to win a general election, it would abolish grant-maintained status. Schools would then again be taken over by the local education authorities.

That is a remarkable assertion, given the fact that, as we heard in Question Time today, more than 250,000 of the nation's children are already being educated in grant-maintained schools. The Labour party is adopting a position extraordinary even by its standards. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dewsbury is not in the Chamber.

Mr. Patten: Missing again.

Mr. Pawsey: My right hon. Friend, speaking from his usual place, says that the hon. Lady is absent as usual.

To the hon. Member for Dewsbury, parental opinion as expressed through a free and secret ballot means nothing. I find it odd that she is so far out of step with her right hon. and hon. Friends—for example, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Members for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who are all clearly moving away from the old clause 4 socialist mentality in which only state ownership and local education authority education is right.

The hon. Lady seems to be in a time warp. No doubt she will change her mind on the matter, precisely as she was forced to change her mind on the sale of council houses. I do not believe that, when thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands, of the nation's children are being educated in grant-maintained schools, she can seriously tell the House that the Labour party will abolish those schools and take them back into local education authority control.

I was intrigued by what the hon. Member for Stretford said about the opting out process. Let me tell him as fairly and as honestly as I can that there has been no change of principle on this side of the House. We remain firmly committed to the principles of grant-maintained schools and their opting out. The hon. Gentleman seemed to be confused. He referred to alleged bribes, but then went on to say that the bribes did not add up. There was a clear confusion in his mind.

If freedom is a bribe, there is indeed a bribe on the table. We are giving schools freedom from the local education authority, and freedom to decide for themselves the course they should pursue. If they wish, for example, to specialise, let them specialise. Freedom is the only bribe we offer. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools used the word "liberated" in a previous debate. That was the correct verb to use. Clearly, we are taking powers from the LEAs and giving them to individual schools.

The funding agencies are there to allocate funds; they are not in any way quality assurance agencies. Their only job is to distribute funds. We are not going down some centralist route, as suggested by Labour Members; we are providing powers to parents and governors. Nothing in the Bill remotely suggests nationalisation. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has echoed a phrase used by our right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) when we discussed the 1987 Bill which became the Education Reform Act 1988: he said that we were moving powers from the hub to the rim of the wheel. Exactly the same comment describes the Bill before us. We are giving powers to parents, and there is no centralisation in the Bill. I therefore hope that we shall soon deal with the amendment and move on.

Mr. Patten: Will my hon. Friend give way?

8.45 pm

Mr. Pawsey: It is always a pleasure to give way to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who so frequently sits in the Chamber answering debates as fully and completely as he possibly can.

Mr. Patten: Does my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Nuneaton—[HON. MEMBERS: "Kenilworth".] I mean, my hon. Friend the Member for Kenilworth and Nuneaton—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] What is it?

Mr. Pawsey: Rugby and Kenilworth.

Mr. Patten: Does my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth think that Labour Front-Bench spokesmen would benefit from visiting a grant-maintained school or two? Does he not think it shameful for them to refuse to visit grant-maintained schools?

Mr. Pawsey: I am pleased that I gave way to my right hon. Friend, because I suspect that he has given the House some information. I had not previously realised that Labour Members had become so petty that they would not visit a grant-maintained school.

Mr. Patten: Does my hon. Friend not agree that refusing to visit grant-maintained schools is a form of educational apartheid on the part of Labour Members? They will find it more and more difficult to make that principle stick as more and more schools become grant-maintained. Do they not want to learn?

Mr. Pawsey: My right hon. Friend makes a salient point, with which few hon. Members would disagree. Of course he is right.

Let me press an invitation on Labour Members. In my constituency, there is one grant-maintained school and another for which grant-maintained status has been approved. I shall willingly take any Labour Members to either of those schools and show them how we, and those schools, can deliver good, efficient education to the nation's children.

My right hon. Friend originally called my constituency Rugby and Nuneaton. He may have had in mind possible changes when the boundary commissioners examine the boundaries. My right hon. Friend may have been looking into the crystal ball more efficiently than I can.

Dr. Spink: Before my hon. Friend moves off that subject, will he invite Labour Members, when they visit grant-maintained schools, to note that, in such schools, the average percentage of children passing five GCSEs at grades A to C is 45 per cent., whereas in other schools the figure is 35 per cent.? Labour Members will then be able to see how grant-maintained schools are delivering higher standards. That is why parents are voting to send their children to them. It is as simple as that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. That does not relate to this amendment.

Mr. Pawsey: I shall conclude on this point. So far, some 453 schools are grant-maintained, with a further 220 applications still to be considered. Of that number, the

[Mr. Pawsey]

vast majority are secondary schools. Some 14 per cent. of the nation's secondary schools have acquired grant-maintained status. That is a most significant figure.

A Labour Government would abolish grant-maintained schools at their peril. Labour Members should realise that grant-maintained schools are liked by parents and governors. If Labour Members want to lose the next general election, they should simply continue saying that a Labour Government will abolish grant-maintained schools. There is no easier or quicker way to ensure that we are returned to office again.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): It is always a great joy to follow the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). He made similar compassionate but totally irrelevant comments to those which he made in Committee, although he did so with a verve which was unfortunately not available to us in terms of seeing the Secretary of State in Committee. The Secretary of State was never in his place in Committee. He was so interested in this major Bill that he did not manage to turn up to hear what some of his colleagues had to say about the clauses.

The Bill makes major changes to our education service. In so doing, it fails to pay attention to the structure of local government. Effectively, local education authorities will be abolished. The Secretary of State might not have put it quite so bluntly, but I dare say that before the end of this evening he may admit that that is the Government's intention.

Worse than that is the fact that the changes in education are not even being done in a coherent way. Certainly the Government intend that all schools should be grant maintained. They talk about giving parents choice and, presumably alongside that, accountability. Local accountability in terms of education depends on having local education authorities. Clearly the Secretary of State and the Government do not wish to have local education authorities.

I should like to examine the effect of the funding agency, grant-maintained schools and the opting-out ballot. In Committee, we pressed the Government about the fact that only one vote will be taken by one set of parents in one term and that it will count for all time. Every generation of parents thereafter will not be allowed to reverse that decision or comment on it. Once schools have gone grant maintained, that is the end of the matter. For a Government who talk about choice, that seems to be a rather one-sided choice to Labour Members.

I should like to examine the effect of those ballots in London and across the country. The fact that there will be no opportunity for schools to return to local education authority management underlines the undemocratic nature of the procedures for the acquisition of grant-maintained status. It further emphasises that the Secretary of State will allow ballots to be declared void if he believes that there has been interference with ballot papers or votes, if information has been disseminated which might be false or misleading—that will apply only if the Secretary of State thinks so—or if the information suggests that grant-maintained status might not be the best option for a specific school. That gagging mechanism flies in the face of any legitimate expression of a range of views.

Mr. Hall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the only way in which this clause will operate is if the parental ballots go against the application for grant-maintained status? In such cases, the Secretary of State will have the power to instruct that the ballot be carried out again because he does not like the outcome. I cannot think of any other reasons why he would want the ballot to be rerun.

Mrs. Prentice: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct in saying that the choice relates only to the Secretary of State; it has nothing to do with parents. If parents choose to remain within local education authority control, the Secretary of State will say that they are wrong in making that decision and that the ballot must be re-examined. He will find reasons for throwing out that democratic decision so that he can have the decision which he wants.

The Bill proposes to allow a school governing body to ballot parents on opt-out by passing a single resolution. The Education Reform Act 1988 provided for double balloting. That is another example of the Government saying that they are not prepared to take any risk that parents might make up their own minds. Parents might decide that local education authorities are good for them, their children and local communities. On that basis, the Government will skew the balloting process to ensure that they get the decision they want. That means that the local community will have no influence whatever over the decision and schools will opt out. If 10 per cent. of schools in a local education authority area opt out, the funding agency will have to share the funding of schools with the local education authority.

I should like to examine the role of the funding agency. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) said, the funding agency is a remote and unaccountable quango. It is a centralisation mechanism by a Government who talk about handing power back to the people, local areas and local democracy. That is especially galling when it comes from a Government who abolished the London education authority because they said that it was too centralised. They pushed education back down to the boroughs in order to give power to parents in the local community.

The Government are now taking that power away from parents and centralising it. They are establishing a remote, unaccountable funding agency which will have little to do with the local area. The funding agency will have little knowledge of the local area and will not know what is happening in local areas in terms of new developments in housing, although I dare say that under the Government there will not be many new housing developments. It will not know what is happening in local areas in terms of new developments in the economy, although I do not suppose that there will be much of that in the recession. Perhaps, in that sense, we should not be too worried.

If new houses were to be built in local communities and if the economy in local communities were to be regenerated, one would think that there should be some organisation which is close to the local people and which would know what is happening in local areas. Such an organisation could help to develop and plan the local education system in local communities. But that is not to be.

The funding agency will be a national quango which is appointed by the Minister. It will probably have to

establish local officers and it will basically become a non-elected local education authority. That says much for choice and accountability.

Dr. Spink: Does the hon. Lady acknowledge that the funding agency will distribute funds on the basis of a pre-fixed formula? Essentially, that is what local education authorities do at present. The formula will be similar. Grant-maintained status gives real ownership of schools to parents, governors, teachers and local communities. Real ownership breeds responsibility and an increased stake in society. That is real accountability at work. The Bill is not a centralising but a decentralising measure. It is about the philosophy of giving choice and responsibility to people. That is what distinguishes the Conservative party from the Labour party.

9 pm

Mrs. Prentice: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is grateful that I allowed him, in an intervention, to make the speech that he intended to make. I know that he did not have the benefit of being a member of the Standing Committee and hearing about some of the more detailed aspects of the funding agency. If he reads the Bill and the White Paper which preceded it, he will find that the funding agency is not a decentralisation mechanism. It will not include local representatives. No one from local government will sit on it. No one with any educational expertise will sit on it. People will be appointed by the Minister. If we go by the experience of the health service and other services, the appointees will simply be nodding heads who will go along with whatever the Government's line happens to be. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hall: The hon. Member for Castle Point (Dr. Spink) admits that.

Mrs. Prentice: I am grateful if the hon. Gentleman admits that they will be nodding heads who will simply carry out the Government's wishes.

Dr. Spink: Will the hon. Lady allow me to explain? The only thing that the funding agency will do is distribute funds. It will not control the schools.

Mrs. Prentice: I have given the hon. Gentleman two opportunities to intervene, but he still has not understood the provisions of the Bill or the role of the funding agency. I ask him to speak to the Ministers and find out exactly where he is going wrong so that he can understand the devastation that the creation of funding agencies may have on local education and local communities.

The Secretary of State loves to prate on about the Labour party chopping and changing its policies. Yet the creation of funding agencies is a real turnaround from his policies on the Inner London education authority and decentralisation. He is recentralising education and taking power away from people and parents. He is grabbing power. He will cosset the power and not allow anyone else to have any say or express any view.

Let us examine how the funding agencies will work. The changes in the calculation of the annual maintenance grants for grant-maintained schools and the suggestion that their budgets will have special protection under the current common funding formula cause us serious anxiety that the Government will penalise pupils in LEA schools because they are determined to pursue their opt-out policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) talked about creating a level playing field. It is clear that the Government do not believe in a level playing field if that does not suit their narrow and blinkered policies. That cannot be more starkly illustrated than by the system of the 10 per cent. trigger for the creation of funding agencies. I shall take as an example the effect of the trigger in London. I raised the matter in Committee and I do so again on the Floor of the House because it is important.

At present each London borough looks after the schools in its area. I can give two examples of where the creation of a funding agency would be triggered by the number of children in certain schools in the relevant borough. Only 3·9 per cent. of Camden's school population goes to the Jewish Free school. Yet if the parents of children at that school agreed in a ballot to opt out, the whole of Camden's education budget would have to be shared with a funding agency. That is not democratic. It is certainly not accountable. I wonder whether any of the parents who send their children to that school know that that would happen if they made the decision to opt out.

The other example is even more stark. In the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham the London Oratory school educates some 1,197 pupils. Only 196 of them are residents of the borough. Those 1,197 pupils represent some 20 per cent. of all the pupils taught in Hammersmith and Fulham. When the Bill becomes law, unless the Secretary of State can tell me otherwise, the funding of education in Hammersmith and Fulham will be shared between the borough and a funding agency because the London Oratory school is already a grant-maintained school.

The decision to share funding between the LEA and a funding agency was not made by the parents of the children in any of the Hammersmith schools. I am sure that if they had known, they would not have been happy to agree with it. Residents of Hammersmith and Fulham, who now decide who represent them, will have funding of education in their schools decided by someone else.

Mr. Bowis: I do not understand why the hon. Lady is making such a fuss. If a school which has a large number and therefore a high percentage of pupils votes to become grant maintained and that exceeds the 10 per cent. threshold, funding will come through the funding council and not directly from the Department. I cannot understand why she is so worried. The benefit to the school will be that it will also get the 15 per cent. additional funding which currently goes to the LEA and is not always passed on.

Mrs. Prentice: I am deeply disappointed that the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) does not understand. He was in Committee when we discussed the matter at length. Let me explain the problem once again.

Only 3·7 per cent. of the pupils who live in Hammersmith and Fulham and whose parents vote and pay their poll tax there attend the London Oratory school. Why should parents from outside Hammersmith and Fulham determine the funding for every other school there as a result of the trigger mechanism under the clause dealing with the funding agency? It is perfectly clear to Opposition Members that it is a totally undemocratic and unaccountable system which we find unacceptable.

Mr. Bowis: I wish simply to correct the wrong impression that the hon. Lady seems to be getting. Unless they become grant maintained, all the remaining schools will continue to be funded through the LEA, so what is the worry?

Mrs. Prentice: The hon. Gentleman has missed the point. Between 10 per cent. and 75 per cent. the funding is shared between the funding agency and the local education authority. The Bill makes it quite clear, and I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has not grasped the point.

We are considering a huge Bill—the biggest Education Bill ever. The Government have tabled hundreds of amendments because they have started to realise that they have got much of it wrong. It is poorly thought out and major changes have not been made to fundamental aspects of it. Scant regard has been paid to the concerns of parents, pupils, teachers and, indeed, all those directly concerned with education in Britain. As will probably become clear in the debate on special educational needs, the Government have paid little attention to all those organisations concerned about the effects and side effects of grant-maintained status.

I believe that we have a particularly undemocratic Government. The longer I spend in the House the more obvious it becomes. They have taken powers away from local education authorities and local government and they refuse to tell people exactly what they are doing and why on a number of fundamentally important matters.

It will not be surprising if we get little information from the Secretary of State on the effects of the Bill as I do not believe that he understands it. He paid little attention to debates in Committee and he occasionally makes what he calls a statement to the House about education and how everything will be all right so long as it is in his hands. I hope that, as a result of this evening's debate and the continuing debate on education, people will realise that the education system is not safe in the hands of the Government any more than the health service, the pits or any other part of the country's economy is safe with them. We will continue to oppose them on every aspect of the Bill because they have got it absolutely and totally wrong.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): In speaking to these amendments I should like to put my remarks in context. In Chelmsford we have three secondary schools and one primary school that now have grant-maintained status, and a number of ballots are pending, including one at a school called Hylands which is of crucial importance for the purpose of my comments tonight.

It is important to bear in mind that grant-maintained status is determined by a ballot of parents. In Chelmsford, each ballot of parents has produced an overwhelming vote in favour of grant-maintained status because the parents believe such status to be in the best educational interests of their children. To give the education authority of Essex county council due credit, I have to say that it has done nothing to impede parents' wishes in any way.

Mr. Cormack: Given the number of grant-maintained schools in his constituency, will my hon. Friend consider inviting Opposition Members to visit some of them?

Mr. Burns: I should be more than happy to have anybody come and see the fine grant-maintained schools in Chelmsford and how enthusiastic parents have been about securing for their children the benefits of such an education. However, I do not want to diverge; I want to stick to the amendments in this group.

It is crucial that the funding agency, which will consist of not fewer than 10 and not more than 15 individuals, should be of the highest possible calibre. It is hardly likely that anyone will disagree with that contention. Clause 1(3)(a) says:

> "In appointing the members of the agency the Secretary of State shall have regard to the desirability of including—
>
> (a) persons who appear to him to have experience of, and to have shown capacity in, the provision of primary or secondary education or to have held, and to have shown capacity in, any position carrying responsibility for the provision of such education".

That is crucial.

On the other side of the coin, my right hon. Friend must exercise extreme care with regard to individuals who would be totally unsuitable for membership of the agency, notwithstanding any qualifications that might put them in the running under clause 1(3). Let me say why I urge my right hon. Friend to think extremely carefully about the composition of the agency. When considering any retired primary headmaster for inclusion, he should take great care with regard to calibre and background. In Chelmsford it has been shown that there is very good reason for such care. At present the Hylands school is balloting parents on whether to seek grant-maintained status. The ballot period will not end until next Monday. During the half-term break, when teachers were not readily available and when ballot papers were being delivered, a semi-anonymous leaflet was distributed to all households. This leaflet gives 10 grounds for saying no to grant-maintained status.

Mr. David Evennett (Erith and Crayford): It must be the Liberals.

Mr. Burns: I am sure that the heavy hand of the Liberals is to be found somewhere.

As I develop my argument, my right hon. Friend will discover that the individuals responsible for this leaflet do not satisfy the criteria for membership of the funding agency. However, given the underhand measure of putting semi-anonymous leaflets through letter-boxes——

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Semi-anonymous?

Mr. Burns: Yes, semi-anonymous. The leaflet has no proper imprint, gives a bogus name for the umbrella group, and gives no address or telephone number. And when people delivering it were challenged by parents they refused to divulge where they came from, whom they represented or why they were doing what they were doing. According to the *Essex Chronicle* of last week, the individual responsible for this skulduggery is none other than a retired head teacher of the King's road primary school in Chelmsford. I hasten to add that, as a child, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler), chairman of the Conservative party, attended that school.

The individual in question also happens to be a prominent member of the National Union of Teachers —*[Interruption.]* That former headmaster—who should not qualify, regardless of what the Bill might say, for consideration by my right hon. Friend as a member of the funding agency—who has nothing to do with Hylands school, took that action off his own bat for narrow party

political purposes on a totally fictitious basis, the 10 points mentioned in his scurrilous leaflet being completely irrelevant and untrue.

9.15 pm

Mr. Patten: I remind my hon. Friend of three points. The first is that, as he knows, I have visited Chelmsford within the last fortnight. The second is that whenever I go to Essex to refresh my political and ideological roots, I always meet the strongest possible support for grant-maintained schools.

The third is that in Essex, as elsewhere, people will have to beware the announcement that I shall make tomorrow about further counter-intimidation measures, to be part of the Bill, which will stop many of the actions of which my hon. Friend and many other hon. Members have rightly complained because of the anti-democratic antics of some Opposition Members.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that intervention. My constituents, in particular parents and teachers at Hylands school, will welcome the announcement that he will make tomorrow to tighten up on intimidation and the issuing of misleading information in an attempt to bamboozle parents into not voting on the basis of an even playing field. Correct information must be available.

I have urged my right hon. Friend to exclude certain people from consideration for appointment to the funding agency. On the other hand, he should remember that the activities of that retired headmaster have enraged the present headmaster and teachers at the school, who are anxious for it to seek grant-maintained status. So when my right hon. Friend is drawing up a list of people for consideration, he should not overlook the many decent, hard-working, first-rate teachers, such as Mr. Tony Mulholland, the present headmaster of Hylands school, who are disgusted by the tactics that have been aimed at Hylands school.

My right hon. Friend should bear in mind that there are many fine individuals throughout the education establishment who utterly repudiate underhand tactics and would welcome a funding agency comprised of those of the highest calibre to ensure that grant-maintained schools continue to flourish, resulting in more parents taking the democratic route and voting for their children to benefit from being educated in first-rate grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I hope that we can move from the antics of Chelmsford some hundreds of miles across the Severn estuary to Wales, where the remit of the Secretary of State does not run. I am glad to see the Minister of State, Welsh Office in the Chamber; we trust that he will answer the points that my hon. Friends and I raise.

I refer specifically to amendment No. 38, which proposes that

"the names of those whom the Secretary of State proposes to appoint shall be submitted to the Welsh Affairs Committee of the House".

I do so also because the case for England has been ably put by my hon. Friends the Members for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice).

There is no doubt that those of us who served on the Standing Committee on the Bill are particularly worried about the need for proper and impartial scrutiny of the membership of the new schools funding agency. Nothing that happened in Committee allayed our fears. In fact, worse has occurred, for in Wales, during the three months that the Bill was in Committee, the whole debate in education and local government circles about opt-out schools and membership of the schools funding agency resulted in a civil war.

Headlines in our national newspapers to the effect that the Bill will put Welsh education in crisis are now commonplace. Indeed, one article mentions that parent-teacher associations in Wales are deeply troubled by the content of the Bill. Mr. Ylltid Lewis, who is the treasurer of the Parents for Welsh Medium Education, which the Minister has championed, said in February:

"Already we have children in primary schools where there is not adequate provision for them at secondary.

We are facing a situation which could be a critical one."

He goes on:

"We represent parents and, hand on heart, we have not had a single parent who has told us, we want this."

I addressed the Welsh meeting of the parent-teacher associations for the Principality in Cardiff some two weeks ago, when there was unanimous disbelief at the way the Bill is going.

I believe also that, so desperate has the Minister of State become to persuade secondary schools, particularly in Wales, to opt out, that he has had meetings in his office of various head teachers who might be inclined to go that way. Certainly he addressed the secondary schools associations in mid-Wales a couple of weeks ago.

The latest attempt to persuade schools in Wales to go down this line is a letter sent to all secondary schools, which included the statement by the Minister of State, Welsh Office, on the completion of the Commons Committee stage of the Bill. I am sure that it is unprecedented in terms of what goes to governors of schools, whether it be in England or in Wales, for the Minister to send out copies of his speeches and statements to try to persuade schools to go down this road.

Another complication which has arisen and which we believe is ripe for the Welsh Affairs Select Committee to deal with is the lack of openness that has surrounded the whole business of opt-out schools and the consultation process, which was started, as we know, back in the summer when all the schools were on holiday. When I asked the Minister and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State whether they would make public the result of the consultations in Wales, the answer was no. They refused to make those responses available for public scrutiny, on the ground that it would breach confidentiality. I am convinced that if the majority of those consultations had been in favour of grant-maintained schools, they would have been made public the following day.

The other problem that we face is that the Bill sets up at least two new quangos in Wales—the Curriculum and Assessment Authority and the Schools Funding Council, with which the amendment deals. The whole business of quangos in Wales, as the Minister knows, is becoming a national and a public scandal. It will be debated in full next Monday in the city hall in Cardiff when the Welsh Grand Committee meets in that city for the first time.

The problems with quangos in Wales have meant that the opposition to the establishment of the Schools Funding Council encompasses all political parties in

[Mr. Paul Murphy]

Wales, save the Conservative party, all teaching associations and teaching unions, all the local education authorities and all the directors of education.

At this point, I have to mention that all the Welsh directors of education have resigned over these proposals. There was reference earlier today to Oscar Wilde, and a *Western Mail* editorial on this matter last month said:

"With apologies to Oscar Wilde, to lose one director of education may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose four looks like carelessness. What's going on?"

It adds that Geoffrey Drought, one of our finest directors of education in Wales, resigned only last week because of the problems and the complications of opt-out schools and what that would bring.

Education is in a sorry state in the Principality, not only because of the resignations, but because of the cuts that the Minister has imposed, and because of unease about the membership of the new quango, if it is set up.

Can we ensure that the quango will include professional and local education authority membership and people representing the churches in Wales—a vital element? What about the Welsh joint education committee, which the Minister and the Government have consistently bypassed since the beginning of the debate on grant-maintained schools and opt-out education? That, too, should be involved.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Wales made a statement about the introduction of new unitary authorities in Wales. If the White Paper is made into an Act of Parliament, there will be about 21 new unitary authorities, which will all be local education authorities. What will be the impact on grant-maintained schools and the Schools Funding Council? We were not told in Committee when the Schools Funding Council is to be set up. With smaller unitary authorities, is it on the cards that the funding council will be set up sooner rather than later?

About 90 years ago, when the House debated education legislation introduced by Mr. Balfour, reference was made to the situation in Wales, where a partnership between local and central government had been established at the end of the 19th century. There is no doubt that that partnership has worked remarkably well and has meant that Welsh schools are some of the finest in the United Kingdom. I fear that unless we accept the amendments and others like them, education in Wales will be in a sorry state.

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): Clause 1 concerns the funding agency and some hon. Members seem to have a misleading impression about its exact role. Given the success of grant-maintained schools and their growth, many people argue that there had to be a body similar to the funding agency simply to fund on an equitable basis schools that have become grant maintained. As we fully support grant-maintained schools, it is right and proper that a funding agency should be set up.

The confusion seems to have occurred over the agency's planning role and the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) compounded misunderstanding about its role in that respect. As I understand it, when 10 per cent. of primary pupils in a local education authority area have gone grant maintained, the funding agency for that sector of education in the area is likely to be set up; we debated that at great length in Committee.

The funding agency's planning function is very narrow: it must plan places for schools in the grant-maintained sector. It will not be in a position to dictate to parents of children in all other LEA schools in the area. Rightly and properly, there must be some liaison between the LEA and the funding agency, to put proposals to the Secretary of State. It is easy for Opposition Members to make a mountain out of a molehill over those arrangements.

The reality is that grant-maintained schools are likely to be heavily over-subscribed and LEA schools might be under-subscribed. It would be for the LEA to determine which schools in its area need to be closed. Conversely, grant-maintained schools might feel that demand was so great that they ought to expand, and in that case I am sure that proposals would be put forward to the funding agency to set up new and much-welcomed grant-maintained schools.

There is a danger of Opposition Members protesting too much about the role of the funding agency when the 10 per cent. figure is reached.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that the funding agency would increase the number of places in grant-maintained schools even if there were vacancies in LEA schools in that particular area?

Mr. Congdon: No, I am not. That issue would, quite rightly, be for the Secretary of State to decide. It may well be that it would be right and proper for a school that is undersubscribed in the LEA sector to be closed and reopened as a successful grant-maintained school.

Conservative Members want schools to be provided to which parents wish to send their children. We do not want schools to be provided simply because the bureaucrats at the LEA town hall wish to provide schools in a particular location. The education system must adapt to suit the source of the demand for places so that it meets the legitimate choice of parents of school for their children.

9.30 pm

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I have been dying to ask him this question for some time. Given that he is so keen on parental choice, why, when he was a member of the education authority in Croydon, was he prepared to sell off Sylvan high school, despite the fact that 97 per cent. of the parents wanted it to remain as an LEA school?

Mr. Congdon: I am delighted by that intervention, because it reveals that the hon. Lady's research is somewhat inadequate. In reality, only about 45 Croydon parents put the school as their first choice out of a possible intake of 240. That school did not serve the needs of Croydon parents; it is particularly revealing that it served the needs of parents who were otherwise forced to send their children to inadequate schools within ILEA. Those parents voted with their feet by sending their children to a Croydon school. The LEA had no problem with taking the important decision to provide a city technology college in north Croydon, which is in my constituency and is now massively over-subscribed

Mr. Dafis: Great emphasis is laid on the fact that the move towards grant-maintained status is a matter of parental choice. The hon. Gentleman has now offered another possibility, which the Minister might like to consider. He has suggested that if a school can be identified as a failure and closed, it can be reopened as a grant-maintained school. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that provides an interesting possibility for the Government to push ahead the movement towards grant-maintained status?

Mr. Congdon: With all due respect, two separate issues are involved. One issue relates to a school that has failed and the setting up of an educational association, which will lead to a grant-maintained school. The other issue, of equal importance, relates to schools that are under-subscribed. In those circumstances, the LEA should look at the number of places that need to be provided.

I am hypothesising—I cannot predict with certainty exactly what will happen in a particular LEA area. One could envisage a situation, however, where it would be proper to bring about change to ensure that another grant-maintained school was provided to reflect parental demand better.

We have heard a lot from Opposition Members about the fact that the measures designed to create more grant-maintained schools are centralising ones, which represent the nationalisation of schools. What a load of nonsense. The fundamental point about the Bill and previous measures is that the only way in which an existing school can become grant maintained is by exercising a democratic—I stress the word—ballot.

I find it odd that Opposition Members are so afraid of parents exercising a democratic vote to decide whether their children's school should go grant maintained. We have heard a lot about the scare tactics that have been adopted and the rumours that have been spread to try to influence the vote of a particular school on grant-maintained status.

In many ways the Bill, contains few measures to increase the GM balloting process because we have a lot of faith in parents voting firmly for their schools to go grant maintained. I very much regret the talk of bribes given to schools to go grant maintained. Schools were given an extra amount of money to cover the costs of setting up, and, more importantly, to reflect LEA central costs. If LEAs find that difficult, they should look at their central costs to reduce them in line with their specific needs. I do not call that bribery. We need to encourage more schools to become grant maintained so that we have diversity in the education system.

I do not know why Opposition Members are so afraid of the setting up of a funding agency with two key powers. The first one is to ensure the funding is calculated on an equitable basis to the schools—as the numbers grow, that will become more important. Its second key power—a comparatively limited role—involves the planning process. Grant-maintained schools will not tread on the toes of the massive number of LEA schools in the region.

If Opposition Members are right and grant-maintained schools will not grow in numbers and flourish, Opposition Members have nothing to fear as the funding agency will barely come into effect. But if, as Conservatives expect, grant-maintained schools flourish, we need to have—and will have—funding agencies that exercise a valuable role.

Mr. Jamieson: I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon), who was telling us about the city technology college in his district. I thought that he would say that it had obtained the poorest results in GCSE mathematics, modern languages and technology in Croydon in 1992, but he stopped short of telling us that.

Mr. Congdon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jamieson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in time, when I have developed what I have to say a little further.

In Committee we were told that, in 20 out of 116 local education authorities, more than 10 per cent. of their schools had opted out. I repeat the statistic for the benefit of the Secretary of State, who was not present at any time during the Committee stage and might not be aware of the figure. It means that, in those districts, control of the education system will soon be in the hands of two competing organisations: the funding agency and the local education authority. Both will have responsibility for providing places, closing and opening schools, and admissions procedure.

We know that the two organisations will be competing, because the Secretary of State told us so on Second Reading. He said:

> "There will be two bodies—the LEA and the funding agency—with parallel but not shared responsibilities. A little healthy competition will be no bad thing for some LEAs." —[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 635.]

It will be the surest recipe for chaos and confusion, as the two organisations compete to provide the same services. In the confusion, what will be missed is a clear and unequivocal chain of accountability for public funds to parents and local taxpayers. Who will the parents contact with their queries and who will have the responsibility of resolving disputes?

Are we to anticipate struggles ahead between the two bodies as they battle it out over the interpretation of key powers—perhaps in the courts, and certainly at the taxpayers' expense? It is intended that, when the 75 per cent. opt-out threshold has been reached, the funding agencies will take over total control of delivery of the education service in the region, hitherto delivered by the LEA. I hope that the Minister will answer the following question: what rights and democratic procedures will be followed for the 25 per cent. of schools that have not at that time held ballots on opting out? Will they compulsorily become grant-maintained schools against the parents' wishes?

We know that the Secretary of State has funding for his unelected quango to mushroom its bureaucracy. The White Paper stated that that was the only organisation to receive extra funding. For the benefit of the Secretary of State, who was not present during our deliberations in Committee, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education, who is present now, told us in Committee that there would be funding for party placemen on the education associations—but more of that tomorrow.

Only the most perverse logic would lead one to believe that two bodies running in parallel and performing the same tasks will lead to lower costs and less bureaucracy. Eventually, as more schools opt out, the funding agency's costs will rise, because it will have to perform many of the

[Mr. Jamieson]

functions currently undertaken by the LEA and administer many of the new powers that the Secretary of State has taken to himself.

The right hon. Gentleman tried to give the impression that the agency will be little more than a streamlined post office, sending monthly cheques to grant-maintained schools with the aid of the funding formula, with a minimal need for individual judgment. That view was reinforced by the hon. Members for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Castle Point (Dr. Spink). I think that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth was being ingeniously misleading, while the remarks of the hon. Member for Castle Point, who I note is not in his place, stem from his ignorance of the Bill.

For the information of those two hon. Gentlemen and other right hon. and hon. Members, the funding agency's responsibilities will be more than handing out funds to GM schools. Once the 75 per cent. threshold has been passed, the agency will have responsibility for opening and closing schools, regulating the number of school places, admissions procedures, appeals, capital allocations, and many other tasks. It will not be a simple organisation whose purpose will merely be to hand over funds to GM schools, for it will replicate many of the responsibilities and duties now vested in LEAs.

Although the Minister said that there will be one funding agency, he stated that it would be free to develop in response to the rate at which the GM school sector grows. It will not therefore be a carefully regulated body of limited size. I thought that it was being likened to an educational bonsai tree—of limited size but mature growth. Instead, it will be more like an educational Russian vine, spreading its bureaucratic tentacles into every part of the country.

I turn to the Prime Minister's extraordinary comments at a Tory local government conference at the weekend. I am surprised that such a body still exists, given the Government's constant erosion of local authority powers. Perhaps in future the Prime Minister will be addressing the Tory quango-goers conference. The Prime Minister said that

"it's time to set a structure for local government that will last. We need to define its responsibilities once and for all. And then let you carry them out."

I contrast that remark with a recent report that received approval from Tory-controlled Devon county council. Commenting on the Bill, it stated:

"Many people now believe that the future of local government and local democratic accountability are themselves at stake."

At last weekend's Conservative local government conference the Prime Minister spoke also of

"a new accountability that goes directly from those who run public services to those who use them."

Devon county council commented on the White Paper:

"At times the White Paper seems to lose sight of the role of the LEA as a resource and protector for the individual parent or pupil and as a focus of local knowledge and accountability. It is difficult to see how a funding agency could be other than remote, unresponsive, ignorant of local issues and unaccountable to local feelings."

The Prime Minister is totally out of touch with local government and is even out of touch with those in his own party who are in local government.

As to GM schools, which are taking a one-way ticket to Government control, Government arguments about parent power and local democracy would have had more credibility if Ministers had accepted the Labour amendment to allow schools to opt back in to LEA control. That amendment gave the Government an opportunity to demonstrate their confidence in the opting-out system, but it was rejected.

One of the first schools to become grant maintained was the highly successful Dorset comprehensive, Woodroffe school—once hailed as the flagship of opt-out philosophy. I am sure that the Government would agree that it is instructive to examine establishments that have direct experience for indications of the worth of the policies on which they are now embarking. After its first year of trading in the grant-maintained market place, the school was reported to have debts of £100,000, culminating in the loss of seven teachers, the disarray of the PTA and the suspension of the head teacher.

9.45 pm

I shall not dwell on all the problems experienced by the school, but it is interesting to note that the chairman of the PTA, Ken Whetlor, was reported to have said, after a year's experience of grant-maintained status,

"If you had another vote on this among parents, you'd have a landslide against it."

That is why the Government do not want parents to have the power to take part in a further ballot to opt back into LEA control. They are afraid to extend democracy to parents, because they know that their dogma would be threatened.

The Bill represents a greater move by the Government towards central state control than any other provision relating to our British way of life. It will take control of education out of the hands of local, democratically elected bodies, and place it in the hands of quangos packed with politically vetted appointees of the Secretary of State. In the past 10 years, Tory Governments have implemented a number of measures. I was interested to hear the Minister describe the current proposals as "liberating". Do we consider the national curriculum liberating, or the national testing system—a system to which the Secretary of State and the Minister have received so many objections in the past few months? In fact, they have had to give way on part of their own policy. National inspection is another example.

Now, the Government want to envelop the whole system with national control of the delivery of children's education by means of the funding agency, which we are led to believe will be based in Darlington. I have no argument with anyone in Darlington, but it is a long way from Plymouth and Devon, and from many other constituencies. We are moving rapidly towards a tightly controlled, bureaucratic, centralised system, with Tory party placemen in key positions and no voice for those with opposing views. Above all, there is no place for parents to be involved in the funding agency, and to shape its thinking.

If the Bill is passed in its present form, we shall have the most centralised, state-controlled education system in the democratic world. How dangerous is an education system when the hands of politicians control every apsect of the delivery of service—when the Government decide which schools should close or stay open, who and what should be tested and even which books children should read? I fear for our democracy when a political party wants to control every aspect of our children's minds.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his announcement that he is to give details tomorrow of measures to stop the intimidation of schools and parents who favour ballots to opt for grant-maintained status. I very much hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will make a similar announcement. The hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) said that there was a civil war in Wales on the issue: those are his words, not mine. His party and its bully boys have been running around Wales intimidating schools for the past two years.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Richards: No; I have not much time.

The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice) said that once the schools have held a ballot, that is the end of the matter. Is she seriously suggesting that she would wish schools to ballot time and again? If so, how frequently would she wish them to undergo such uncertainty and how frequently would she wish teachers' careers perhaps to be threatened if schools were reintroduced into the local education authority system?

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: It is ironic that Conservative Members should question the notion of balloting when they are so insistent that every governing body must make a decision every year about grant-maintained status. The point that I was making, but which the hon. Gentleman failed to grasp so I shall repeat it for his benefit, is that one set of parents ballots to opt out of the local education authority, but the next set of parents—their children and their children's children—does not have the opportunity to ballot to opt back in. That is undemocratic.

Mr. Richards: My point is that it would create uncertainty for schools.

The hon. Member for Torfaen said that four directors of education in Wales had resigned because of the Government's policy. Is he seriously suggesting that those directors set themselves up as martyrs for education in Wales? Of course they did not. The four directors of education in Wales could see the writing on the wall. They could see the prospect of their empires crumbling, so they took early retirement with very generous settlements.

The hon. Gentleman also says that there is no demand for grant-maintained schools in Wales. There are already 90 schools ready for grant-maintained status. Once my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State stops the bully boys in jackboots riding roughshod over Wales there will be an avalanche of schools wanting to acquire grant-maintained status.

Mr. Dafis: I shall be brief and try to hammer home some of the points already made by the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy). I speak especially to amendment No. 38 and wish to emphasise the near unanimous opposition to the Bill in Wales.

I draw the House's attention to a declaration signed by a coalition of 10 bodies involved in education in Wales. The *Western Mail* described the declaration as an unprecedented act. The declaration states:

"It is the joint and considered view of the representatives that the Education Bill is inappropriate to the current needs of young people across Wales, and it is likely to have a detrimental effect on educational opportunities and educational standards within the schools of Wales. Such is the strength of these concerns that it is vital that these anxieties are made known, as a matter of urgency, to parents across Wales."

The organisations involved are the Parent Teacher Associations of Wales, Parents for Welsh-Medium Education, the National Association of Head Teachers in Wales, the Welsh League of Youth, the Wales Assembly of Women, the National Union of Teachers for Wales, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers in Wales, Assistant Master and Mistresses Association in Wales, the National Association of the Teachers of Wales and the Welsh Joint Education Committee. If anyone speaks for education in Wales, those bodies do.

I support amendment No. 38 because, although it fails to make a clear distinction between Wales and England, it nevertheless offers a way of dealing with the difference between England and Wales in one highly significant matter—the membership of quangos.

If it were not so disgraceful, the situation would be laughable. It seems that the best method of advancement in Welsh public life is to be a Tory or, better still, a Tory candidate at a general election. In my constituency, two previous unsuccessful Tory candidates have found themselves on the East Dyfed district health authority. The wife of a third has been transferred from the health authority to the managing board of the local hospital trust. That is an appalling state of affairs and it is even worse that it should happen in education. It is bad enough that powers should be removed from local democratically elected bodies to a funding agency which is a quango. It is worse still that membership of the body should be in the gift of the Secretary of State for Wales, any Secretary of State for Wales, but particularly a Tory Secretary of State.

If present evidence is any guide, the Secretary of State will select Tories for such a body—a high proportion, anyway. They will certainly be Tory sympathisers or people acceptable to the Tory party in Wales, in which case —and this is the point—by definition those people will hold values that are incompatible with those of the majority of the people in Wales. That is especially offensive in relation to education where our whole tradition is egalitarian, collaborative and co-operative. That is our tradition, particularly in education.

It is crucial that membership of the Schools Funding Council, if it comes into existence, which is by no means certain, should, to some degree, reflect the values of the people of Wales.

Such a council could have a far-reaching effect; it could open or close schools and, crucially, could propose a change of schools' characters. Clause 88 empowers the council to do that and that would mean, in most cases, a proposal to change the character of a school to make it selective. The council could profoundly change provision in Wales and adopt a master plan for restoration of a system of tripartite education that the Secretary of State thinks so highly of in the White Paper.

It is true that electors and local education authorities could raise objections, but it would be idle to pretend that a funding council, backed by the Secretary of State, would not have an enormously influential effect on the development of education in Wales.

The amendment offers a mechanism to provide some control and check on the nature and membership of the council and I support it because of that and because it would modify the deeply undemocratic nature of the Bill.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): It seems the fashion in these debates to leave no time for a Minister to wind up and it is clear that Opposition Members do not want to hear what the Government have to say.

I intended to speak only to amendment No. 38 which has a Welsh dimension, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) would probably not wish to share these three minutes with me, I hope that I shall be forgiven for saying a few words about the other two amendments. All are similar in subjecting the appointments to these two bodies to parliamentary scrutiny of one kind or another.

I want to contrast the speeches of my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy), because my hon. Friend talked about the freedom that we were giving to parents, freeing power to go from the hub to the rim of the wheel, while the hon. Member for Torfaen began his speech by talking about fears. He was talking not about the fears of parents but about the fears of vested interests in the education system in Wales.

Having sat throughout the Committee stage and having listened throughout the debate this evening, I am sensitive to the fact that the Labour party is somewhat embarrassed that it is not on the popular side in this argument. The Labour party wants to turn the argument somehow, so that it appears to be on the side of parents, but we are the ones who clearly believe in parental ballots, and we are transferring power to the parents.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) referred to 10 bodies, including the Welsh Joint Education Committee, which is very much a vested interest in the education system in Wales. I ask him to look beyond that facade of education. Let him go and talk to the headmasters and headmistresses, as I did when I spoke to members of the Welsh Secondary Schools Association in Llandrindod Wells. If he spoke to those people, the hon. Gentleman would get an entirely different view of the meaning of the Bill.

It being Ten o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER, *pursuant to Order [15 December] and Resolution this day, put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 240, Noes 272.

Division No. 166] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan

Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Gordon McMaster.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.

MADAM SPEAKER *then put the Question on all remaining amendments up to the end of clause 143, moved by a member of the Government.*

Clause 6

SUPERVISION OF FUNDING AUTHORITIES BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Amendment made: No. 179, in page 3, line 10, at end insert—

'( ) Before making an order under this section, the Secretary of State shall consult the funding authority unless, for reasons of urgency, it is not in his opinion reasonably practicable for him to do so.'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 8

DIRECTION TO ADMIT CHILD TO SPECIFIED SCHOOL

Amendments made: No. 83, in page 4, line 23, after 'area' insert

'of a local education authority'.

No. 84, in page 4, line 24, leave out 'in the area'.

No. 85, in page, 4, line 31, at end insert—

'( ) A direction under this section shall, unless it is given on the determination of the Secretary of State under section 9(4) of this Act or by the funding authority, specify a school in the area referred to in subsection (1) above.'

No. 86, in page 4, line 41, leave out from 'Act' to 'references' in line 42.

No. 87, in page 4, line 43, after first 'authority' insert 'subject to subsection (6A) below'.

No. 88, in page 4, line 45, leave out from second 'schools' to end of line 5 on page 5 and insert—

'(6A) Where the education which is suitable education for the child is also education of a kind to which an order under section 7(1)(b) of this Act applies made in respect of the area referred to in subsection (1) above, references in this section and section 9 of this Act to the appropriate authority are to be read in relation to—

(a) that child, and

(b) any maintained school (other than a maintained special school) or grant-maintained school in that area, and any such school in any other area to which an order under section 7(1)(b) of this Act applies which provides education which is relevant education in relation to that order,

as references to the funding authority'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 15

DUTY TO COMPILE INFORMATION AND CONDUCT RESEARCH ABOUT PROVISION OF EDUCATION

Amendment made: No. 128, in page 8, line 31, at end insert—

'( ) The Secretary of State shall exercise his powers under this section so as to secure, in particular, the provision of information relating to the provision of education for children with special educational needs.'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 16

"GRANT-MAINTAINED SCHOOLS"

Amendments made: No. 57, in page 8, line 36, leave out from beginning to end of line 39 and insert—

'(1) A school conducted by a governing body incorporated under this Part of this Act, or Chapter IV of Part I of the Education Reform Act 1988, for the purpose of conducting the school shall be known as a grant-maintained school.

(2) A governing body may be incorporated under this Part of this Act-'.

No. 58, in page 9, line 5, leave out

'under Chapter IX of this Part of this Act'

and insert 'published under Chapter IX'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 25

POWER TO DECLARE BALLOT VOID FOR IRREGULARITY

Amendments made: No. 143, in page 13, line 8, leave out 'or'.

No. 144, in page 13, line 10, at end insert—

'( ) that persons other than those eligible to do so have purported to vote in a ballot so held,

( ) that ballot papers returned for the purposes of a ballot so held have been marked by persons other than those to whom they were issued or those duly authorised to act on their behalf,

( ) that persons who were eligible to vote in a ballot so held have been prevented or hindered from doing so, or from doing so freely in accordance with their own opinions, by any other person, or

( ) that voting in a ballot so held is likely to have been influenced to a significant extent by the dissemination of information appearing to the Secretary of State to be to a material extent false or misleading'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Schedule 3

PROPOSALS FOR SCHOOLS TO BECOME, OR BE ESTABLISHED AS, GRANT-MAINTAINED SCHOOLS

Amendment made: No. 138, in page 169, line 3, after second 'such', insert 'form and'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 62

POWERS OF GOVERNING BODY

Amendment made: No. 59, in page 36, line 21, at end insert

'except money lent under section *(Loans to governing bodies of grant-maintained schools)* of this Act'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 73

MAINTENANCE GRANTS

Amendment made: No. 60, in page 44, line 13, at end insert

'and grant regulations may provide for determinations (and revisions) to be made by reference to amounts determined or redetermined for the purposes of this section by the Secretary of State'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 75

CAPITAL GRANTS

Amendment made: No. 129, in page 45, line 16, at end insert—

'( ) Before giving a direction under subsection (3) above, the Secretary of State shall consult the funding authority.'—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 76

IMPOSITION OF REQUIREMENTS ON GOVERNING BODY IN RECEIPT OF GRANT

Amendment made: No. 145, in page 46, leave out lines 21 to 25 and insert—

'may, in particular, if any conditions specified in the requirements are satisfied, require the payment to the funding authority of the whole or any part of the following amount.

( ) That amount is—

(a) the amount of the payments made in respect of the grant, or

(b) so much of the value of any premises or equipment in respect of which the grant was paid as is determined in accordance with the requirements to be properly attributable to the payment of such grant,

whichever is the greater'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 82

IMPOSITION OF REQUIREMENTS ON GOVERNING BODY IN RECEIPT OF GRANT

Amendment made: No. 146, in page 49, leave out lines 3 to 8 and insert—

'may, in particular, if any conditions specified in the requirements are satisfied, require the payment to the Secretary of State of the whole or any part of the following amount.

() That amount is—

(a) the amount of the payments made in respect of the grant, or

(b) so much of the value of any premises or equipment in respect of which the grant was paid as is determined in accordance with the requirements to be properly attributable to the payment of such grant,

whichever is the greater'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 86

PROVISIONS CONSEQUENTIAL ON SECTION 84

Amendment made: No. 61, in page 51, line 46, leave out from 'authority' to end of line 47 and insert

'by virtue of regulations under section 51 or 52 of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 107

DISPOSAL OF SCHOOL PROPERTY: SUPPLEMENTARY

Amendments made: No. 62, in page 66, line 14, leave out 'such an order'.

No. 63, in page 66, line 15, at beginning insert 'such an order'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 137

CASES WHERE NO REQUIREMENT FOR CHRISTIAN COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

Amendment made: No. 130, in page 84, line 9, leave out '122 of this Act' and insert

'127 of the Education Act 1993'.—*[Mr. Patten.]*

Clause 148

QUALIFIED DUTY TO SECURE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN ORDINARY SCHOOLS

Mr. Win Griffiths: I beg to move amendment No. 42, in page 80, line 27, leave out from 'school' to end of line 26.

Madam Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments:

No. 173, in clause 149, page 89, line 39, leave out 'use their best endeavours,'.

No. 74, in page 89, line 40, leave out 'to secure' and insert 'ensure'.

No. 50, in clause 155, page 93, line 12, leave out 'and' and insert—

'(c) where the named school in subsection (b) above is a special school, specify which of the conditions listed in section 148 subsection (2) above apply, and'.

No. 51, in schedule 9, page 180, line 36, after 'school', insert

'or other school providing education solely for children with special educational needs, approved under section 172 of this Act'.

No. 97, in clause 156, page 93, line 36, leave out 'subsection (2)' and insert 'subsections (2) and (3)'.

Mr. Griffiths: In this group of amendments, there are five different debates. The first can perhaps be dealt with quickly, because it is to some extent a semantic exercise, but it needs to be put on the record that, strictly speaking, the words in clause 148—

"unless that is incompatible with the wishes of his parent"—

are not necessary, because the statementing process in clause 155 adequately covers all the rights that any parent has.

In correspondence with me, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), dealt explicitly with the point. He said that, if a parent decided that the choice offered under clause 148 was incompatible with his or her wishes, the rights and duties of LEAs contained in clause 148 would fall away completely. The rights of parents in clause 155 and schedule 9 to appeal against the choice of school that a local authority may nominate in the statement will be upheld. I would maintain that the words referring to incompatibility with parental choice are an unnecessary veto in clause 148, because the parents have exactly the same rights in clause 155. The special educational consortium pointed out that those words in clause 148 were undesirable.

10.15 pm

The purpose of the following amendments in the group is to strengthen the duties of the governors to provide for children with special educational needs. The Bill as drafted mirrors the Education Act 1981, yet part III of the Bill is designed to improve the provisions in the 1981 Act, because it has been shown over the past 10 years that there are very good reasons for including provisions, some of which are in part III, to strengthen the rights of parents of children with special educational needs.

In the Bill as drafted, the governors are enjoined to

"use their best endeavours"

in providing for children with special educational needs. Amendment No. 73 would place a duty on governors to ensure that the special educational needs of any child were properly met without question. There is no doubt that, over the past decade, governors could say that they used their best endeavours but that, unfortunately, it was impossible to provide for the special needs of a particular child. The Government could have taken this opportunity to be more positive and to place a definite duty on governors to make sure that children with special educational needs received the support they required.

The Government could argue that the provisions in part III will strengthen the statementing process, so that governors and LEAs will be duty-bound to make sure that the provisions in a statement will be met by the LEA and the school governors. That still leaves children who have special educational needs but are not deemed to be in such need as to require a statement, dependent on the best endeavours of the governors, which in the past decade have sometimes been inadequate.

There are two possibilities. First, governors could say that they had used their best endeavours but that the emotional or behavioural problems of a child were such that the school could no longer provide for that child, and exclusion rates could rise. Secondly, another child without a statement, a quiet child but a slow learner, could be left at the back of the class, and if the parents were not sufficiently concerned, the child's needs could be allowed to lapse completely, because the duty on the governors to use their best endeavours is subject to a wide interpretation.

Mr. Harry Greenway: It is rather hard, in educational terms, to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. There is no reason for statementing children as slow learners. On the other hand, there may be some educational reason. Would the hon. Gentleman care to be more precise?

Mr. Griffiths: It could be argued that, under the Bill, a child who has been statemented will have been subjected to a process tightened up to such an extent that the needs mentioned in the statement will be provided, whereas a child who is a slow learner but is not deemed to be so badly behind as to require statementing will have his provision determined otherwise. Unless the parents are particularly concerned and careful, such children will not get the attention they deserve.

By suggesting replacement of the words "use their best endeavours" with "ensure", we are attempting to have the process tightened up. The governors would have placed on them a very real duty that they could not escape. In the past, it has been shown that the words "use their best endeavours" have been used as a means of opting out.

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman knows that no one is more anxious than I to have appropriate education provided for children with special needs, especially when statementing has been carried out, when needs have been precisely shown. But I have to ask the hon. Gentleman whether he is being realistic. If he is simply probing and saying that we ought to push further and further, I am with him, but this amendment would mean that, even in the case of a maintained nursery school, the governors might have to adapt premises forthwith, whether or not they had the resources to do so. Surely the hon. Gentleman is being a little over-ambitious in pressing an amendment in these terms.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Gentleman may recall the Chinese proverb to the effect that one should aim for the stars if one wants to get to the top of the tree. That is what we are doing. We are trying to impress on the Government the fact that the wording of the 1981 Act, which has regulated governors' actions over the past decade, has been shown not always to provide in the best possible way for children with special educational needs. We are seeking to tighten up the way in which governors are required to provide for such children, and I hope that the Government will respond positively.

I should like to move now to what is, in effect, the third part of the debate on this group of amendments. I refer to the need for a local authority, when providing a statement for a child, to specify in particular why it considers that only placement in a special school is appropriate.

Clause 148 places upon a local education authority a duty to integrate, but the Government put some conditions on how that duty is to be carried out. Account has to be taken of the needs of the child and the views of the parents, as well as factors affecting the efficient education of other children in the same class and the efficient use of resources. Thus, there are very specific conditions that a local education authority must fulfil if it is to integrate a child into a mainstream school. We would make it incumbent on a local education authority to specify which of those reasons applied when, in a statement, it named a special school to which the child should go.

It is important to consider the background to the amendment. In the HMI Audit Commission report "Getting In On The Act", 36 per cent. of parents with children in special schools said that they would prefer to have their children in ordinary schools, with all the specialist support needed to enable that placement to be maintained in an effective manner. On the other hand, 11 per cent. of parents with children in ordinary schools wanted their children to be in special schools. So there was a much greater desire among parents to have their children in ordinary schools, with the specialist support being available, rather than have the children placed in special schools.

The Spastics Society did its own survey, which reached much the same view as the HMI report. It cited a particular case, that of a lady whom they called Mrs. Baldwin, with a son named Paul who had attended an integrated nursery and then went to a mainstream infant school. The head teacher at that school said of that child and of two other children, who were the first disabled children to attend the school, that he could not have them in the school because they constituted a safety risk.

Mrs. Baldwin would have liked to have fought that decision of the head teacher, but because she was recovering from a nervous breakdown, she felt that she could not go through the trauma that would be involved. However, she looked forward to the day when a local campaign might help to provide integrated schooling in her area.

So there is no doubt that many parents would like to have their children in integrated provision. In a case where the LEA felt that such integrated provision was not the best place for a child, at least by specifying the reasons, the parent could, in an informed way, decide whether to appeal against the decision.

Mr. Hawkins: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that a difficulty in the important area of special needs education is often that the circumstances that lead to a child being statemented can change over time? While I appreciate the reasons that lead the hon. Gentleman to advance the case that he is making, a local authority might be restricted to choosing a particular category when there might be a combination of categories.

Does he agree that it is crucial when dealing with special needs children to remember that the outreach which special schools provide—by providing peripatetic teachers to help in mainstream education—varies from one area to another? Is he aware that what he is suggesting could work only if that outreach was always available?

Mr. Griffiths: That is not necessarily the case, but, in any event, we are talking about a situation that should prevail, with that combination of special schools and specialist support from specialist schools or centres going out to help in mainstream schools. Our proposal would give parents specific information to enable them to decide whether to appeal against a statement.

It would also help the LEA, because by always specifying the reason for not integrating a child, the LEA could, within a year or so, review what it is doing to see whether there was some way of overcoming what might turn out to be a common problem to which there was a straightforward solution.

10.30 pm

The Spastics Society is very sure that there are good and acknowledged reasons for reducing the number of people in special schools to the bare minimum for whom there is genuinely no realistic alternative. But it believes that the continued existence of special schools should not be allowed to undermine the longstanding commitment to integration by providing an easily available alternative that bypasses the difficulties of adapting and supporting schools adequately in the task of catering for children with the widest possible range of needs.

I just want to mention an amendment put down in the name of the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam). We debated this matter briefly in Committee, and the Minister said that he might wish to consider an alternative proposition, which he felt could perhaps be used by the generality of independent schools to seek state funding. I know that great care was taken to draft an amendment which would meet that concern.

We are talking here of over 100 independent special schools in England and Wales, and over 80 non-maintained special schools. Probably all those schools make highly specialist provision. The Royal National Institute for the Blind did a survey which showed that, out of 21 special schools for blind and partially sighted children, 10 were outside the maintained sector; and that for blind and partially sighted children with other severe handicaps, there was only one school in England and Wales in the maintained sector.

The issue at stake, as we see it, is that a parent should have the right to nominate such a school in exactly the same way as the Government are giving them the right to nominate a maintained school. It is entirely possible that a local education authority would decide that a particular child, because of his or her specialist needs, should be placed in one of these independent or non-maintained special schools anyway.

It is also true to say that, if a parent is dissatisfied with the statementing process and with the fact that the LEA has not named an independent or non-maintained special school for the child as the most appropriate provision, the parent has the right of appeal. But that is right at the end of the statementing process and, even if we allow for the possibility of local authorities managing to do their statements in six months, going to the tribunal will take another one, two or three months—who knows how long? —and it may mean that the child's needs will not be met for a long time.

I hope that the Government will therefore agree that so many parents of children who are deaf, deaf and blind, partially sighted or have profound multiple handicaps can have a meaningful choice of schools only if they are able to choose from independent and non-maintained special schools, as well as from schools in the maintained sector. It would be a small step for the Government to move from giving the parent the same right to go to the tribunal at the appeal stage as at the beginning of the process.

Earlier today, Madam Speaker was kind enough to add two amendments to the selection, because amendment No. 97 was a paving amendment for Nos. 98 and 99. We were a little disconsolate because amendment No. 40, which was suggested to us by the Centre for Studies on Integration in Education, was not selected. It would have put local authorities and schools to a greater test about making integrated provision. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) was deeply disappointed, because he has a long and successful track record in pursuing the rights of disabled people, and I know that he would have liked to speak to that amendment.

Our last few amendments in the group deal with providing for arbitration. Quite a number of voluntary organisations, such as the Spastics Society and the British Dyslexia Association, were keen that there should be a stage between the end of the statementing process and the appeal to a tribunal, when parents and the local education authority could reconsider why they had not reached an agreement on the statement, and to put it to an arbitrator —on whom both would agree—who could study the evidence and come to a decision.

We are firmly of the opinion that anything that can be done to avoid the panoply of proceedings associated with a tribunal would be welcome. However user-friendly the Government may like to make a tribunal, it will be a place where highly legalistic arguments will be used about the provisions of the Bill or the clashing views of expert opinion.

Many parents have said that they would not gladly go through the existing appeals procedure again. Parents, who already have a difficult and challenging job to try to ensure that the educational and other special needs of their children are dealt with properly, then find themselves in the middle of a fight over legalistic interpretations of whose duty it is to provide what, and over conflicting expert opinions about their child's needs.

I hope that the Government will consider setting up an arbitration procedure. In Committee, we suggested that its deliberations should not take longer than 28 days, so that the statementing procedure is not held up unduly. Many parents want a new procedure to be introduced so that they can avoid having to go to the tribunal, which in itself means that the statementing procedure has been a failure.

I hope that the Government will respond positively to all the amendments in the group, because I firmly believe that that is what children with special needs need and what their parents, as well as all those voluntary organisations that work long and hard in that sector, want.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I must point out that there is a slight error in the amendment. Where it reads:

"leave out from 'school' to end of line 26"

it should read "line 28".

Sir John Hannam (Exeter): I am puzzled by the wording of the amendment which seems to take us backwards rather than forwards.

I shall confine my remarks to amendments Nos. 50 and 51 which were tabled by me, members of the all-party disablement group and other hon. Friends. The amendments were tabled in response to representations from the Special Education Consortium and other disability organisations. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools has been extremely helpful in receiving numerous delegations and correspondence on special needs education. I had hoped to secure his acceptance of an earlier amendment that would have ensured that membership of the funding agency included someone with knowledge of special needs. For some reason, that amendment was not selected, so I now express the hope that we can achieve further progress in a slightly different direction for parents who want to be able to make the correct choice of school for their child.

Amendment No. 50 would amend clause 155 so that if an LEA does not name an ordinary school in the statement, it will be required to spell out the reason or reasons for not doing so. As the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) pointed out, clause 148 sets out a qualified duty on LEAs

"to secure education of children with special educational needs in ordinary schools."

That duty is conditional on the needs of the child being met, the views of the parents, the efficient education of other children in the school and the efficient use of resources. Our amendment to clause 155 is designed to help parents by giving them information at an early stage to which they would ultimately have access should they pursue their case to appeal.

It would be desirable and in line with the Government's policy on open government and access to information that that information should be noted on each statement and, therefore, be accessible to the parents as soon as a decision has been made. That information would also enable LEAs to monitor their procedures and take account of that information when reviewing and planning provision.

The Government have clearly expressed their support for the principle enshrined in the Education Act 1981 that pupils with special needs should be educated in ordinary schools to the maximum extent practicable. Hon. Members who were here on Friday for the debate on anti-discrimination legislation will be aware that the move towards the integration of special needs pupils into ordinary schools has progressed slowly in many LEAs. It is an important matter.

If the reasons given by LEAs for not offering integrated placements were monitored, it would establish whether the Government's intentions on integration were being frustrated. It could reveal if the reverse were the case and a particular LEA was proceeding with integration too fast, against the wishes of parents. That would also become apparent from the number of cases in which parental wishes were cited as the reason for not offering a placement in an ordinary school.

Mr. Harry Greenway: My hon. Friend is talking about a fascinating and important sector of education. Is he implying that some LEAs would ignore, for some reason, suggestions made by the educational psychologists about a child's education? Is it suggested that the educational psychologist might not give the full reasons for not pressing for integration or non-integration? I am not quite clear—will my hon. Friend clarify that issue?

10.45 pm

Sir John Hannam: It does not relate to that subject. It is basically because the aim of the 1981 Act was to integrate as far as possible the 18 out of 20 pupils with special needs who would be best educated with their peers at normal schools. The other 2 per cent. were estimated to need special-school education. That was the Government's intention as clearly laid down in that Act. However, unless the amendment is accepted, evidence in the educational psychologists' reports or wherever will not be seen clearly to show why the child is not being integrated in a normal school.

The local education authority will not have that information on the record in order to make its planning decisions for the future and to provide the necessary resources in normal schools for the provision of the special units for educating children with special needs. In addition, there will be no clear evidence of when an education authority is trying to integrate too many children after not providing the necessary special units.

The amendment is designed to achieve information and would have a neutral effect on integration. It is important because it would produce information about integration, both to individual parents, so that they know what is happening, and collectively to the education service. The amendment was tabled in order to place information on the record for parents and the education authorities. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept the amendment's constructive intention which is very much in line with the Government's basic policy on integration.

Amendment No. 51 switches to the special school sector and deals with what is considered to be a right of the parents of children whose needs are more complex or severe and who may need highly specialist provision that is available only in the non-maintained sector. Under schedule 9 to the Bill, the parent receiving a copy of the proposed statement from the education authority is enabled

"to express a preference as to the maintained school or grant-maintained school at which he wishes education to be provided for his child and to give reasons for his preference."

At the crucial stage of the drafting of the statement, when parents have already undergone the full assessment procedures with their child and are ready to express a preference for a school—whether maintained or non-maintained—a choice is not provided for them. To give them the right to express a preference for one sort of school, but not the other, at that stage may set up antagonisms that could run through and echo around the later decisions about the final statement.

We all know from our experience with parents of children with special needs how totally involved they are in their children's upbringing and how incredibly hung up they can become if they feel that they are being frustrated by those in authority over them.

Mr. Enright: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there is a particular difficulty for denominational special schools in the non-maintained sector? Will he add their cause to his cause, as they are of a piece?

Sir John Hannam: I was not aware of that aspect, as I had not received any representations. However, I know that non-maintained special schools in my constituency are often linked with particular religious orders, and different groups and trusts set up to establish special schools.

I believe that expressing a preference at that earlier stage should help to reduce reliance on the later stages of decision-making and on the use of the proposed tribunal system of appeals.

As we all know from constituency experience, a large proportion of special education is provided by excellent non-maintained special schools for the blind, deaf and physically disabled. The hon. Member for Bridgend referred to the Royal National Institute for the Blind's 1992 survey, which showed that 22 per cent. of visually impaired children attend a special school for the visually impaired. Of the 21 special schools in the whole of England and Wales, 10—nearly half—are non-maintained.

One such school for the blind, and a superb one at that, is in my constituency—where we also have the Royal West of Englnad school for the deaf. It is one of the schools that have successfully been developing vision for children with dual sensory handicaps, which is a tremendous step forward. Both are non-maintained special schools.

The amendment does not argue for an unfettered right for parents to have their child placed in their preferred school, but seeks the right merely to express a preference from among available and appropriate provision from the same point that other parents are able to do so.

My hon. Friend the Minister said that parents have the opportunity to express their views generally, as part of the statement process, and that if the final statement does not accept those views, parents can appeal. My hon. Friend the Minister argued therefore that non-maintained special schools, if they are good enough, will continue to be supported. If that system is sufficient to allow parental preference to be indicated, why not leave it as it is for all schools? Why pick out maintained and grant-maintained schools and leave out non-maintained special schools?

The Bill provides an extra means of attending to parental preference by allowing parents to express a preference at the beginning of the process but only for maintained schools. Consequently, if a parent lives in an area where all special schools are non-maintained—such as in the south-west—their opportunity to have their preference is reduced. All schools in my area of the south-west are non-maintained. Certainly parents can appeal—but surely that is not the path that we want to go down, because it would be establishing a placement system based on litigation.

My hon. Friend the Minister argued that the right to express a preference for a non-maintained or independent school would open the floodgates and that schools that choose to be independent should not expect the protection of statute. I accept that point in relation to independent schools because there is, in their case, the possibility of someone making a profit—though I do not necessarily accept that as a reason for excluding them.

Parents will only have the right to express a preference —not to demand funding. The LEA would still be bound to decide whether such a placement represented an efficient use of resources. If it thinks that the school is too expensive, the LEA has a cast-iron reason for refusing. Non-maintained schools are different—they cannot make a profit. They are established not from a desire to be independent of the LEA management but because many minority disabilities are best catered for on a regional basis. All their placements are LEA funded. They are eligible for capital grants from the Department for Education and they are extremely grateful for the generous amounts that they have received from the Department for extensions and developments.

Those schools are an integral part of the education system, and even if independent special schools cannot be included in the choice, surely the excellent non-maintained special schools should be part of the expressed parental choice.

I sincerely hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reconsider my request and will make the necessary change to schedule 9.

Mr. Hall: When the White Paper "Choice and Diversity" was published and the promises that went with it were made, there was an expectation that special needs problems would be addressed by the Bill. We could be forgiven for thinking that because of the statement in chapter 9 of the White Paper, on page 40, in which the Government recommitted themselves to the principle that "pupils with special educational needs . . . should be educated in ordinary schools to the maximum extent possible".
The interesting words are
"to the maximum extent possible".
The special needs lobby was given assurances by the Secretary of State that special educational needs provision would be improved in the Bill. The right hon. Member for Exeter——

Sir John Hannam: Hon. Member.

Mr. Hall: I stand corrected. No doubt the hon. Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) looks forward to the promotion that I have offered him, and perhaps it will be forthcoming.

I have often commended the Education Act 1981 to the House as a forward-looking piece of educational legislation, with the proviso that it is the only educational legislation since 1979 that has had any educational merit. It was put on the statute book by Mark Carlisle, then Member of Parliament for Runcorn—my next-but-one predecessor, now Lord Carlisle of Bucklow. The Act enshrined in statute the 1978 Warnock report, which dealt with special educational needs.

It is worth reminding ourselves that, although the Bill was enacted in 1981, it did not come into effect until 1983 when it was implemented by regulations. Commendably, it sought to remove the categorisation of handicap in education—a worthwhile move. It went on to say that pupils' special educational needs should be made specific in individual statements. That was an excellent piece of legislation: it really meant that provision for such pupils would be needs-led rather than resource-led. However, because of the limited resources allowed to local education authorities, the statementing procedure is clearly resource-led now.

Mrs. Lait: Does the hon. Gentleman remember our debate in Committee on Baroness Warnock's later thoughts about her report? Last autumn, she suggested that she considered the report naive, and thought that many of her recommendations were not valid today.

Mr. Hall: I do not agree that that applies to many of the recommendations; in any case, everyone is entitled to

revise his opinions. I still consider it good educational practice for the special educational needs of an individual pupil to be set down in a statement rather than being subjected to categorisation. That was the wonderful thing about the 1981 Act. We hoped that this Bill would include measures enabling the statementing procedure again to become means-led rather than resource-led. Unfortunately, when we put our views to the Minister on 26 January—I had questioned him before—he said:

"No, I will not confirm anything of the kind."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E,* 26 January 1993; c. 1136.]

He went on to give an exposition of why the statementing procedure would still have to be resource-led. Clause 149 extends those arguments.

We hoped that the Bill, bad though it is, would produce some increase in provision for special educational needs, but the Government have missed that opportunity in drafting clause 149. If, even at this late stage, the Minister accepted the amendment, we would go some way towards addressing the problem.

I part company with the hon. Member for Exeter on another important issue. The Warnock report stated that, at any one time, approximately 20 per cent. of the school population would have special educational needs, that 2 per cent. of those would require a statement, and that 18 per cent. would have such needs at some point in their school careers. At no point did the report say that the 2 per cent. with statements should be educated in special schools. Both the report and the White Paper spoke of the integration of pupils with special educational needs into ordinary schools. That is another reason why those of us in education, with an interest in special education, find clause 149 very disappointing. It provides the Government, and schools, with a get-out.

If integration is to succeed in the education system, it must have the necessary funding. Funds must be available to ensure that pupils' special educational needs are best met in their own schools. I see that the Secretary of State agrees with that.

Clause 149 includes the words "best endeavours", which disappoints us. It states that schools shall use

"their best endeavours . . . in exercising their functions in relation to the school . . . to secure that if any registered pupil has special educational needs the special educational provision which his learning difficulty calls for is made".

It is a get-out clause. We are entitled to say that it contains two obstructions to integration. The first is registration.

11 pm

Until a pupil is registered in a school, the clause's provisions do not come into effect. Some pupils will then be excluded from schools either temporarily or permanently. However, more important are the words "best endeavours". If a school has a pupil with special educational needs but the school's best endeavours do not meet those needs, how will they be met? Will they be ignored at that school because of the operation of clause 149? The answer must be yes, which is why the words "best endeavours" must be removed. If they are removed, the school will have a duty to meet the needs of such a pupil. It is worth remembering that 18 per cent. of pupils with special educational needs might not have a statement and their needs could remain unmet.

We have heard a great deal in Committee and again today about local management of schools. While the Secretary of State is here, I must tell him that if he goes to my constituency and visits any primary school which is faced with falling rolls and which is told that it must make teachers redundant because of those falling rolls, the schools will tell him that local management of schools is sometimes not practical. Schoolteachers will be made redundant, which will disrupt the curriculum. In a couple of years' time, if the area begins to expand again, the school will have to re-employ teachers, which is an inefficient use of resources. The Secretary of State talks about the wonderful aspects of LMS, but he must remember that it means that governing bodies sometimes have to make teachers redundant, which does not go down well.

If the Government were to say that there was a ring-fenced element for special needs in their funding formula for schools, it would go some way to ensuring that pupils' special educational needs were met in their present schools. The Secretary of State would do well to consider that idea.

We have heard much about improving the statementing procedure. As someone who was directly involved in that procedure for seven years before coming to the House, I could not agree more with the Secretary of State. However, the way to do it is to employ more educational psychologists so that the professionals can get on with the job. That is the only way to reduce waiting lists and give more people access to a good tool of education. The Secretary of State may say that there is no money available, but we have to ask how he intends to put into effect the rhetoric of his promise to improve the statementing procedure.

There are further problems. What happens where special units are attached to mainstream schools and where the admissions to the schools are the responsibility of the governing bodies if they are grant maintained, and the admissions to the units are the responsibility of the local education authority, which has a duty to provide overall cover for special educational needs? What will happen when clause 149 requires schools to use their "best endeavours" to meet pupils' special educational needs?

I have a direct question about special schools applying for grant-maintained status. A later amendment deals with balloting in such schools, but will the Minister confirm now that admissions to special schools, as opposed to ordinary schools with special education facilities, will be at the behest of the local education authority, as he told the Committee? During consultation on the White Paper and subsequently, how many demands did the Minister receive from special schools that they be given the opportunity to acquire grant-maintained status? His reply could assure us that there is a demand for this move in special educational needs.

I see education as having an intrinsic value. I would like to see education that provides equality of opportunity and is freely available for all who need it. We see in the White Paper and the Bill that the Government see education as something to be bought and sold in the market place and subject to the market economy; a commodity which subjects pupils to what the Government would call the rigours of the free market place. I wonder whether the Secretary of State sees any intrinsic value in education, or does he agree with me that there should be some equality of opportunity in our system which would give every pupil the opportunity to prosper?

The Secretary of State was subjected to a television interview on Sunday when he took exception to being called arrogant. This Bill gives him 44 more powers to

exercise control over education. He seems to think that it is like "Dad's Army"—that everybody else is out of step but him. If he would listen to those in education about the demands for education, we might have a better Bill.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Adverting to the last few sentences of the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall), the last thing that any Minister should sensibly do is listen to the educational world for advice. The only advice I could give is to listen to what they say and then do the opposite. That seems to me a better way of behaving and I say so with all sincerity.

I am very happy to speak in support of amendment No. 51, which commands all-party support in the House. I am grateful for the explanation of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) and for the lucid way in which he advanced a very compelling case for the minor changes which should be made in wording—minor but significant in terms of the message that will be given to various teachers and governors who work so hard in both non-maintained and maintained schools dealing with those with visual and hearing handicaps, among others.

The Minister will know, because he is a student of history, that I sat on the Standing Committee that considered the Bill that became the Education Act 1980. I also served with my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on the Standing Committee on the 1981 Bill dealing with disabled pupils. The hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) was also on the Committee. She was then translated out of the House but has now come back. She led very effectively in those days. She has now matured a bit and become much more stateswomanlike, or statespersonlike, which I think is the correct term now.

That was a very good Bill because it attempted to give to parents of children who have a handicap the same rights and opportunities, inasmuch as they could be provided, as parents of children in the mainstream sector. I felt that that was a major step forward because, like the 1980 Act, it put into statute rights and responsibilities for parents. It is strange to admit in the House that, before 1980, parents had very few rights in the selection of a state school for their children. We passed the 1980 Act and gave parents more say and the right of appeal in the selection and provision of a place for their children. In 1981, we gave the same rights to parents of disabled children and introduced a range of concepts, some of which we can look back on with pleasure, but some of which need tightening up. Certainly, in my day, I felt that the statementing procedure was far too lengthy in arriving at a decision.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will embark on the attack on those authorities, rather like St. George of Worcester, slaying the dragon. I commend to the House the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter. For example, there are 21 special schools in the whole country that cater especially for visually impaired or blind children. I believe that 10 of them are non-maintained. There is a problem over indicating a preference, a problem over access and a problem of the downgrading of the choice of such a non-maintained school for those who teach and work in the schools. That aspect has not been mentioned tonight, but it is important in the context of perception.

The fact that there are so few schools means that there cannot be one in every local authority area or every neighbourhood, as we should like, because of the sheer difficulty of numbers. In Kent, there is a school for the blind—Dorton House, in Sevenoaks. That is our nearest school. It happens to be non-maintained. If it did not exist, if it were taken away, or if its numbers were reduced, some of my constituents' children would be denied access to their nearest school. We talk about extending choice, yet in that case there would be no choice—or at least no easy or immediate choice—for my constituents who might wish to send their children to a non-maintained school such as Dorton House, which is well respected in the south-east.

Because of the scatter of such schools across the country, whether they are maintained or non-maintained, there will still be problems of access. The Minister must consider that. There is great uncertainty in those schools at present. A robust and positive response from my hon. Friend would go down very well, and would settle the nerves of the people who do such marvellous work in the schools.

There is also the vital question of parental choice. We all live in a realistic world, and we know that we can talk only of preference rather than of choice, in that choice cannot be maximised in every case. If a school that takes 120 pupils is over-subscribed by a factor of four, clearly more than 300 people will be disappointed. We know that that is true of mainstream schools.

The amendment deals with a smaller number of schools for the visually handicapped. It refers only to allowing parents to express a preference. If that preference cannot be met, just as preferences cannot always be met for children who attend mainstream schools, parents will fully understand, so long as the procedures are clear and they have a right of appeal and a right to an input. If my hon. Friend listens to the arguments on the subject that have been advanced from both sides of the House, the signal that he will give will be superb, and he will go down, as I believe that he will, as a superb education Minister—especially if he does as I ask.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: I do not intend to detain the House long, because I had the opportunity in Committee to voice many of the arguments. However, I am aware that some hon. Members are hearing the arguments for the first time.

I begin by talking about some of the difficulties regarding special needs that arise in my constituency—and, I am sure, in many others—which the Bill will do nothing to correct. Those difficulties are caused by the problem of funding. I know that funding may not be a popular subject to mention to Ministers at this time. In view of the general state of the economy, it may be unrealistic to think about more money for education just now. None the less, over the past few years local education authorities' funds have become increasingly tight, and their ability to supply additional support in the classroom for children with special educational needs has been reduced.

Parents of pupils with special educational needs are now beginning to realise that their children can be guaranteed extra help in the classroom only if each child has a statement. I feel sad about that. Ideally, there should be a more informal relationship between children, parents, teachers and the local education authority. The LEA should be able to supply what children need without having to go through a lengthy formal procedure.

Unfortunately, many parents now realise that they must go through that procedure to ensure that their children get the extra help which is needed.

11.15 pm

In my constituency in the past two years, there has been a vast increase in the number of children who are receiving statements. The local education authority has increased the amount of money available for children with special needs, but it has not been able to keep pace with the increased number of statements. As a result, many children have found that the learning support they receive in the classroom is being steadily diminished year by year, which puts extra pressure on local education authorities. Parents find that difficult to understand.

Local education authorities are often criticised because they take too long to make statements or they supply statements that are not meaningful documents. In that case, it is not easy for the parents to say, "The child's statement says this and you are not supplying it."

I am not defending local education authorities. As my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) ably said, we are not addressing the root cause of the problem which is the lack of resources and the difficulty of local education authorities in supplying the necessary resources for children.

A real danger is that the process of statementing will gradually encompass a larger percentage of children unless definite criteria are laid down as to what constitutes special needs. Pressures do exist, and that fact needs to be addressed. The Bill does not address the problem.

The Government's answer has been to provide tribunals for parents to challenge local education authority intransigence. Although we support tribunals, there is a danger that they set up confrontational situations between parents and local education authorities. We should be looking to a spirit of co-operation. We want parents, children, teachers, local education authority officials and educational psychologists to come to some amicable agreement on what is in the child's best interests. We rehearsed these arguments in Committee. We need a pre-tribunal arbitration stage that would enable the issues to be settled in a much more informal way. We would not need to go through a legalistic and what could be an expensive procedure. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider that proposal, although it was rejected previously.

There are other problems. I was interested in the number of statements issued by my local education authority. I am speaking from memory, but I think that my local education authority had completed two thirds of its statements in the six-month procedure period. The reason why one third of the statements had not been completed did not have anything to do with the local education authority. Some of the problems related to social services and others to the district health authority.

It is difficult to understand that, although the local education authority has a duty to provide a statement within a six-month period—which seems to be reasonable and which we all applaud—statements may be held up because other agencies are involved. We need to address that matter seriously.

When we asked the Minister about the matter in Committee, we were told that there were three possible answers. One was that parents had different means of complaining if other agencies were involved. However, if it were a national health service complaint, parents would have to complain through the procedures for complaining about health services. They would have to go to the chief executive or general manager of their local health service or hospital. If that failed, they would have to take it up with the health service ombudsman.

My district health authority takes, on average, approximately two and a half months to respond to my letters. Such a time scale would make nonsense of the NHS complaints procedure for parents trying to get a quick response from a health authority.

It might be interesting for Ministers to reflect on another problem that I came across. One parent did not want her child to be statemented. It had not occurred to her that her child was in such serious difficulties that she needed a statement. But the child's head teacher could not supply her with the resources that she required unless she had a statement. So the parent was put under great pressure to have her child statemented when she did not want that. It caused some conflict. The parent felt, rightly or wrongly, that a statement was a stigma and she did not want her child to be labelled in that way. We must take that view on board and be sensitive to parents' feelings.

Mr. Harry Greenway: The hon. Lady is putting a most interesting point. However, children have to be categorised in many ways—in terms of IQ, special need and other needs. Special needs are simply one form of need. Does the hon. Lady agree that if parents are carefully and properly counselled they will accept the statementing process, if it is suitably sensitive? Sometimes it is not, I am sorry to say. That is when problems arise.

Mrs. Campbell: My point is that it is perhaps anomalous to single out children with special needs for this treatment. I ask the House to consider whether it is always appropriate to meet those needs by a statement. Certainly in the past, when LEAs had more flexibility and perhaps more funds available, it was usually possible to provide a great deal of support for children in the classroom without their having to go through the statementing procedure. That is the main point.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend has reminded me of an interview that I had with a headmaster when I was recruited to my first school more than 35 years ago. We did not have statements. We had a remedial department which had as many as seven forms and seven qualified staff. The headmaster said, "This is the most expensive department in the school, and quite right too."

Is not the challenge to the Secretary of State for Education tonight to explain how, in the circumstances of competitive performance and results of pupils which he is creating in the Bill, headmasters or headmistresses who think in that direction will be able to use their best endeavours to see that that position is maintained? Will there not be a problem of people taking action, possibly legal action, against the school or, indeed, the Secretary of State, to define what best endeavours are?

Mrs. Campbell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. Perhaps the Minister will take it up in his reply to the debate.

Opposition Members who feel that schools are communities which provide for a wide variety of different needs and abilities feel that as much integration as is

[Mrs. Campbell]

physically and humanly possible should be achieved. Parents who have experienced mainstream integration for their children with special educational needs often speak highly of that experience and are anxious that, if they move from one local authority to another, their child can still be integrated into a mainstream school.

Many good local education authorities have planned to integrate children into mainstream schools and, consequently, have had to make some difficult decisions about closing special schools. Making resources available in mainstream schools often means running down provisions in special schools and closing one in order to fund the other. I believe that is right, but the ability of local education authorities to make that provision and fund it sensibly will be greatly reduced by the Bill, because the Government have introduced a clause to allow special schools to opt out of local authority control.

I can envisage a good local education authority that is trying to integrate children into the mainstream sector finding that the number of children in a special school is reducing and that the only sensible educational solution is to close down the school. If the school objects to that decision, it now has the opportunity to opt out of local authority control. The Minister has given repeated assurances that he will not allow that to happen, but we all know that, in practice, it does occur and schools opt out because they wish to fight local education authority closure plans. I am worried that if they opt out, grant-maintained special schools will do their damnedest to attract as many pupils as possible and, if they are successful, they will reverse the integration process and that will have a damaging effect on the community and, ultimately, on children with special educational needs.

I have made some points. I am afraid that they may not all be related directly to the amendments under discussion, but I hope that the Government will respond to them.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I suggest that one assumption underlies all the amendments which have been tabled and supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope that we debate and search for the best policies to benefit children with special educational needs with the minimum of political partisanship. Therefore, I take some of the observations of my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and the hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) as, to some extent, badinage.

The assumption underlying the amendments, which reflects that of the Government in framing the Bill, is that there should be carefully planned and co-ordinated provision of education for children with special needs in a strategy that embraces both the grant-maintained sector and the local authority maintained sector. That is what the Government want and what we all want.

However, the Bill does not make it clear how that is to be achieved. The roles of the Funding Agency for Schools and grant-maintained schools need to be interlocked almost at every point with the role of local education authorities in relation to special educational needs. We should be able to look forward to an intimate complementarity and partnership between them. But it seems to me that the mechanisms and processes whereby this is to be achieved are not made entirely clear in the Bill. The Government assume that it will happen, and no doubt the sensible and well intentioned people who work in special educational needs will do their best to ensure that it does.

I suspect that amendments Nos. 73 and 74 to clause 149 were tabled by Labour Front-Bench Members in a deliberately simplistic way to remove the qualification on the duty of all concerned to make appropriate provision for each child. I am much in favour of the deletion of the cliché "use their best endeavours". It is not appropriate that a Bill brought to the House by the Department of Education should contain clichés. Jargon is unavoidable, but clichés should be abhorred. However, it is not helpful to substitute for this cliché a summary insistence on perfection. How, in practice, are the powers and duties of all concerned to interlock in the best interests of children with special educational needs?

11.30 pm

In subsections (3) and (4), clause 5 requires a two-way sharing of information between the Funding Agency for Schools and local education authorities. Clause 142(4) requires the governing body of a grant-maintained school to provide information to a local education authority in the exercise of its duties. So far so good, but the precise nature of the mutual obligations remains unclear. The responsibilities of the two sectors are properly inseparable, as the drafting of clauses 148 and 149, without amendment, indicates.

The funding agency has a duty to secure sufficient places in grant-maintained schools, including places for children with special needs who do not have a statement. As has been said, such children may constitute about 18 per cent. of the nation's school children, of whom an increasing proportion will be in grant-maintained schools as the sector grows. The funding agency must provide realistic funding to support these pupils. It must also provide capital and maintenance grants to cover, for example, the cost of physical adaptations and specialised equipment that may be necessary to enable grant-maintained schools to receive and educate children with particular disabilities.

How does my hon. Friend propose that the funding agency should be provided with the necessary expertise and be enabled to give the necessary priority to this dimension of its responsibilities? Meanwhile, the local education authority, operating in its sphere, has responsibility for children who are to be statemented. It is responsible for the process of assessment, for the establishment of the statement, for ensuring that what is specified is provided and for subsequent review and reassessment. For many children, this whole process will begin and continue within grant-maintained schools.

More broadly, local education authorities have a duty —set out in clause 147—to keep under review the whole range of provision for children with special education needs in their areas. It is clear that that duty will have to be undertaken in the closest co-ordination with others concerned. Obviously, in the case of the grant-maintained sector, it is crucial that it be carried out in conjunction with health authorities, to which local education authorities and schools look for the provision of speech therapy and physiotherapy. The interests of far too many children have been lost in the gap between the responsibilities of LEAs and those of health authorities. I should have liked to see

that aspect of co-ordination more firmly secured in this legislation. The hon. Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) was right to draw attention to this issue.

Local education authorities' reviews of provision for special educational needs should also be undertaken in close relationship with section 19 reviews under the Children Act. Department of Education circular 791 calls for clear and coherent authoritywide policies for special educational needs and for monitoring the performance of schools and support services. These amendments, in their various ways, seek to secure the achievement of this objective. I do not say that they all do so satisfactorily, but that, I think, is the Government's aim.

pagAt all points, therefore, co-ordination is assumed, but it remains unclear—to me at any rate—how local education authorities are empowered to achieve it. Clause 149(3) sets out a duty to promote integration. Amendment 42 to clause 148 bears on that issue. I am glad that the Government have given renewed impetus to integration, but integration must be carried forward at a pace and in a manner that is in the interest of the child.

That implies a full knowledge on the part of LEAs of the circumstances and nature of provision in all schools, including grant-maintained schools, and close co-operation between them. That will certainly be the wish of professionals, but what powers will the LEA have in the event that professionals in the grant-maintained sector disagree with the judgment of professionals in the LEA sector?

Both sectors have a vital interest in the training and professional development of teachers. With more children with special needs being educated in mainstream schools and with our rising aspirations for children with special educational needs expressed in the national curriculum, there is an immense task for initial teacher training and for the in-service professional education of teachers.

Every teacher will need at least a competence in the education of children with special needs, and every school will need special needs co-ordinators and possibly other staff trained to increasingly high expertise in the highly diverse field of special educational needs. All of that will need systematic organisation and monitoring, and I am not clear from the Bill how responsibility for that will be apportioned.

The Funding Agency for Schools and the grant-maintained sector will have to work with LEAs to secure a rational and sufficiently extensive overall pattern of special needs provision. Every school will need to be able to cope with the most common special needs. No school should be able to shirk that responsibility, which is found enriching by schools that embrace it positively, as most do.

In the middle range of needs, there will have to be carefully planned, differentiated provision involving specialist support staff and specialist units in the grant-maintained and LEA sectors. Then there will, certainly for the foreseeable future, need to be special schools. The Bill envisages that they may be grant-maintained schools, although overall responsibility to secure the range of provision will rest with the LEA. For rare and intensely special needs, there will have to be highly specialised provision at regional or national level.

In that context, and bearing in mind amendment 51, I too am puzzled that the Government have not proposed to entitle parents to express a preference for their child to be placed at a non-maintained special school. Many of those schools, centres of excellence, must be considered to be an indispensable part of the overall system. It is the duty of the LEA to provide suitable provision to meet the particular needs of the child, and placement at a non-maintained special school will, in particular cases, be appropriate.

We, and LEAs, must have regard for the efficient use of resources in that incantation familiar from the 1981 Act and, properly, reproduced in the Bill. But if that objective is to be achieved, and if the formula is not to mean merely rationing and disappointment, the most careful joint planning and co-ordination will be essential. As the hon. Member for Cambridge suggested, we must avert the increasing tendency for more statements to be sought, because that does not tend to the efficient use of resources.

So the lines of responsibility must be clear. The principal message of the Audit Commission and HMI in getting in on the act was the need for clearer definition of objectives and responsibilities and for improved accountability in the special needs sphere. The Audit Commission and HMI saw the LEA as the champion of the pupil with special educational needs, but how are LEAs to fulfil that role in relation to the Funding Agency for Schools and the grant-maintained sector?

That is what the group of amendments variously seeks to address, and no doubt the code of practice which is adumbrated in clause 145 will clarify a great deal. But I should be grateful if the Minister would give some foretaste of it and explain how he envisages the necessary close co-ordination between the sectors being achieved.

Mr. Bowis: One should begin speaking in any debate on special educational needs by paying tribute to the achievements of Conservative Administrations, who have made giant strides, as is recognised by the professionals who deal with children with those needs. We are light years on from the generation to which the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) referred, and he recognises the progress that has been made.

It is against that background that we are now looking to tighten regulations, take them a bit further and move them on. That is what this Bill does, in terms of the tribunal, speeding up statementing, and so on. The next stage may well be, as I have hinted to my right hon. Friend in the past, to look at ways in which the funding process for the achievement of statementing by local education authorities might be assisted by some mandatory award system which would take away any question mark over the determination of LEAs to proceed and remove any disincentive for them to do so on grounds of cost.

Mr. Spearing *rose*——

Mr. Bowis: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I think that, like me, he is looking forward to the Minister's response.

When we reached this stage in the Committee, dealing with schedule 9, it was one of the moments when the Committee came together across the divide of politics. I think that that is recognised by the *Hansard* record, which refers to the amendment being proposed by "Mr. Win Forth". I can only suggest that that was a recognition that my hon. Friend was moving fast towards all-party agreement on this.

More seriously, the debate that we had then was resisted by my hon. Friend on the grounds that the amendment was a little too wide and because of the precedent that he saw being set. I am grateful to my hon.

[Mr. Bowis]

Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir. J. Hannam) for tabling his amendment and indeed to our colleagues for supporting him. He put a better way of achieving this to the House and to Ministers. The point that he made about these being charitable schools which depend almost exclusively for their fee funding on placements with the LEAs is an important one.

My hon. Friend the Minister said in Committee that he would ponder on that and, I think he said, come back another day. I do not know whether this is that other day, but perhaps we can be thinking in terms of finding a way of securing the future of these schools and, more important, securing the right education for the children about whom we are talking. I have had too many cases in which the LEA eventually agrees to the placing of a child in such a charitable school only after a great deal of effort, campaigning and pressure from me and others. We need to shift the balance a little towards parental choice, if we can.

I have the case of a child now going to the Department on appeal on the ground that the LEA believes that there is an adequate school for deaf children in the area maintained by the borough, but the parents believe that there is too much emphasis on signing in that school and feel very strongly that there should be an alternative school available. However, the only alternative is in the same category.

I do not know whether we can put it into the Bill in the form that my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter is seeking by giving the parents the right to name a school and the LEA the right to decide whether that naming is reasonable. I look forward to my hon. Friend's response, and I ask him to go on pondering, as he promised he would, until we can ensure that such children have the education that we know they need.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): I do not wish to detain the House for long this evening, but if we are to achieve a limited number of statements and extra teaching for those with special educational needs within our schools, we will have to do at least two things.

One is to change the training within our teacher training establishments so that teachers are trained to recognise and diagnose special educational needs at a very early age. When that diagnosis has taken place, they must know what to do about it and how to teach those children. They must have the modest additional resources in terms of teacher time within each school to give that necessary extra attention and intensive teaching.

That will need additional money, but it could and should be encompassed within the budget for special educational needs. I fear that the worst cases—the statemented cases—will attract all the resources, and leave little to provide the extra teaching time for the 14 to 15 per cent. of the school population who will need it if they are to achieve their natural ambitions, and if their natural ability is to be realised.

A revolution will be required in our teacher training colleges, and a change in the way in which education authorities and the Department of Education use the money necessary for special educational needs. I hope that the Minister will indeed ponder those matters, and will ensure that our teachers know how to teach, and how to teach children to read, using phonetic and other methods, as that is what those children desperately need and have been denied by the avant garde experimental teaching methods so prevalent in our teacher training colleges and schools in recent years.

11.45 pm

Mr. Forth: In the time left to me, I shall endeavour to deal as fully as I can with the amendments that have been mentioned in the debate. I hope that I shall be able to cover most of the issues raised by hon. Members from both sides of the House.

The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) claimed amendments Nos. 73 and 74 were designed to strengthen the position of children with special educational needs who may not have a statement of their needs. In trying to persuade the House that the amendments are unnecessary, I remind hon. Members that we amended the Bill in Committee to benefit all pupils with special needs, but particularly those without statements. To do so, we introduced two new policies: a requirement on governors to publish and report to parents on their schools' policies for all their pupils with special educational needs, with or without statements; and an explicit provision for local education authorities to continue to offer special educational needs support services to all children with SEN in maintained schools—whether grant-maintained or local education authority schools—who wished to use them. The amendments introducing those policies are now clauses 149(4) and 150 of the Bill.

An underlying principle of the Education Act 1981 was that the school should meet the great majority of the special needs of its pupils, with support as necessary from the authority. The introduction of local management of schools and self-governing, grant-maintained status means that schools are now increasingly autonomous. But increased autonomy means increased responsibility towards pupils with special needs and increased accountability towards their parents. The school has the direct influence, constant contact with, and the prime responsibility for all its pupils, and the school is directly accountable to parents.

I believe that we have strengthened the duties on governors in clause 149 to "use their best endeavours"—a phrase which has been repeated over and over again in the debate—to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs. We want all school governors to think carefully about the provision that their schools make for pupils, and that is why we tabled an amendment to the clause.

Our amendment—clause 149(4)—provides for a school's annual report to parents to include information about the school's policies for pupils with SEN. The Secretary of State may make regulations prescribing the information to be included. The annual reports are required of LEA governors, under section 30 of the Education Act 1986, and of grant-maintained school governors under paragraph 8 of schedule 6 to the Bill.

The Secretary of State will be able to prescribe the areas that governors' policy statements should cover, and I envisage that the statements will be very comprehensive. The Secretary of State will use existing powers, under section 8 of the 1980 Act and clause 137(1) of the Bill, to require school governors to publish information about their policies for pupils with SEN.

We shall consult on the issues that schools' policies should address, but I should like to give the House some

idea of what we have in mind. A school's policy might cover basic information that parents might want, such as the name of any SEN co-ordinator—that was mentioned during the debate—the number of pupils with special needs in the school, admissions arrangements and any SEN specialism for which the school caters.

The hon. Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) should note that the admissions arrangements and other matters, including the policies I have outlined, would cover special units that were part of a school, as well as the school itself. For that purpose, units would be regarded as an integral part of the school.

A school's policy might cover equipment and building adaptations, physical access for the disabled, teachers with specialist SEN qualifications and staff training provision. The policy might then set out the school's objectives for its pupils with special needs, including its arrangements for identification of such pupils. The policy statement might set out the school's recording and evaluation procedures, and the indicators which it uses to monitor the implementation of its policy. It might then specify how it meets those objectives through its arrangements for access to the national curriculum for special needs pupils, use made of support teachers, differentiated teaching practices, policy on short or part-time withdrawal, information on individual curriculum programmes and pupil groupings.

Finally, it might be sensible if the policy set out arrangements with bodies and agencies outside the school. The policy might state what arrangements the school had with other special or ordinary schools and with the local health and social services. It might also set out its policy for obtaining SEN support services, either from the LEA or other sources.

The degree of detail and comprehensiveness that I have outlined might reassure many of those who have spoken in the debate. It might go some way to providing a reply to the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth), because a school's policy might identify the role of that school, as defined by it, and the way in which it would be required to work with LEAs.

On amendment No. 50, I have already stressed the Government's commitment to meeting the needs of all children with special needs. We recognise, however, that a proportion of them will require formal assessment of their educational needs and, therefore, a statutory statement of SEN. In addressing their needs in the Bill, one of our major priorities has, again, been to involve their parents as active partners in the whole process of determining their children's education. We are doing that by creating extended rights for parents, setting up an independent appeals mechanism and establishing a code of practice, which was referred to frequently in Committee and mentioned again tonight. That code of practice will govern LEAs' exercise of their functions under clause 155.

My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) tabled amendment No. 50 and said that he wanted to make LEAs justify, on a child's statement, their decision to specify a special school. The LEAs would not be similarly required to justify naming an ordinary school and I believe that the amendment is unnecessary, because the Government believe that LEAs should always discuss with parents all aspects of a statement. Those discussions should include the name of the appropriate school, be it special school or ordinary. We are confident that the Bill makes full provision to that effect.

The naming of a school is the final stage in writing a statement, and I believe that that is right. Surely there is little point in assessing needs and considering provision if the school has already been decided. The logical flow of the statement leads to naming the appropriate school, so the specification of needs and provision should justify that very naming.

Of course, the LEA must explain its decisions to parents. Indeed, parents should have been closely involved throughout the process of assessing the child and drafting the statement. We have already issued clear advice to this effect. Our circular 22/89 states:

> "The relations between professional advisers and parents during the process of assessment are of crucial importance. Parents should be encouraged to feel that they are partners in this process".

I hope that the House is assured that the further guidance that we shall issue under the Bill will underline the importance of that partnership. Beyond that, the Bill gives parents an important new right—to state a preference for their child's school. The statement will go to parents in draft form. They will have explicit rights to make representations to the LEA and to hold meetings with it. I believe that, therefore, there will be ample opportunity for parents and the authority to discuss the name of the school which should appear on the statement. When parents state a preference, LEAs will be bound to abide by that preference, so long as certain reasonable conditions are met. In that respect, the Bill makes fully adequate provision for parents to express their views and for authorities to explain their thinking. At the end of that process, it is for the LEA to decide which school should be named and to arrange the provision. But the LEA cannot, in fulfilling its duties, ignore—even if it does not always meet—the wishes of parents. Moreover, authorities know that they cannot act arbitrarily in naming a school. Their actions will be subject to scrutiny by the new SEN tribunal set up under the Bill. They must, under the Bill, tell parents of their rights of appeal to that tribunal. If a case goes to appeal, the LEA will have to justify itself before the tribunal, which will have the power to overturn an LEA's decision and to instruct that LEA to name the school of the parent's choice.

I want to talk about amendment No. 51, because I know of the interest in the subject, which was so eloquently raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Exeter and for Dartford (Mr. Dunn). The amendment refers to the parents' rights, under the Bill, to influence an authority's decision on which school to name on the child's statement of special educational needs.

I am not persuaded of the need for the amendment, and I shall explain why. The Government fully recognise the high quality of specialised provision offered by many non-maintained special schools and other institutions outside the maintained sector. I am confident that the Bill does not jeopardise their future—many people have expressed a fear that it will—as long as they continue to provide the best education at the most reasonable cost, as I believe that they do. We expect LEAs to take into account the quality and cost effectiveness of such schools when considering the placement of a child.

Our intention in paragraph 3(1) of schedule 9 is to extend to parents of children with statements of special

[Mr. Forth]

educational needs the same right that the Education Act 1980 gave to other parents. That is the right to express a preference for the maintained school that their child should attend. If hon. Members consider the nature of non-maintained special schools, they will see why it might not be appropriate to include them in the provision. A non-maintained special school is a school not maintained by a local education authority, but which is approved by the Secretary of State as a special school—currently under section 9(5) of the Education Act 1944. There are at present 81 such schools, many of them run by major charities, such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind, Barnardos and other such organisations.

Those schools are clearly distinct from those in the maintained sector. They are not subject to closure or alteration by local education authorities; nor will the Funding Agency for Schools have any jurisdiction over them. They exist in a market, and will continue to do so by offering what that market wants. They have no need to be propped up by specific legislative provision of the sort envisaged by the amendment. Moreover, if non-maintained special schools were brought within the scope of the provision, there would be a serious question about where to draw the line.

Independent schools might take the view that they, too, should be included. Some hon. Members mentioned that possibility. In law, there is no such thing as an independent special school, but there are independent schools that may be approved to cater for children with special educational needs. There are more than 100 of those, and yet more that take in individual statemented children on the basis of specific approvals obtained by LEAs from the Secretary of State. Such schools do not even have to be "special" in character. They may be ordinary independent schools that happen to be able to offer provision for a particular disability. It would be hard to justify excluding any independent schools that had the appropriate approvals from an extension of the "parental preference" provision which took in the non-maintained sector. If all independent schools were given an incentive to try and get on the bandwagon, there would be a real danger of matters getting out of hand.

However, we recognise that some parents may feel strongly that their child should be placed outside the maintained sector in, for example, a non-maintained special school. Let me spell out what the Bill provides for such parents. Instead of expressing a preference under paragraph 3 of schedule 9, the parents will make representations under paragraph 4(1)(a). In response to the issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter, may I say that parents will do so at the draft statement stage—at the same stage of the proceeding at which they would be able to exercise their rights under paragraph 3 of schedule 9. Paragraph 4(1)(a) provides for parents to make representations to the LEA about the content of their child's statement—including making a case for placement in a non-maintained special school, independent school or any other institution that they may consider appropriate for their child. The LEA will then be under a duty, as in paragraph 5(1) of schedule 9, to consider all such representations before finalising the statement. It will have to do so against the background of its statutory duties to determine and arrange appropriate special educational provision for the child. The LEA will be fully aware that if it cannot justify its decision not to name the non-maintained special school, the parent may, under clause 157, challenge the LEA's decision and appeal to the independent tribunal, which would then have the power to direct the LEA to place the child in a school outside the maintained sector.

We have achieved a balance between recognising the special independent nature of such schools and their special privileges, which I briefly described, while allowing the full mechanisms available in the Bill, including those that I outlined, which I believe will give full rights to parents and full protection to non-maintained special schools. For those reasons, I am not persuaded that we should accept the amendment in the names of my hon. Friends. I hope that on reflection——

It being Twelve o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *pursuant to Order [15 December] and Resolution [12 March] put the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Amendment negatived.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Question on all remaining amendments up to the end of clause 195 moved by a member of the Government.*

Clause 150

PROVISION OF SEN ASSISTANCE

Amendment made: No. 126, in page 90, line 35, at end insert—

'( ) The terms on which goods or services are supplied by local education authorities to the governing bodies of grant-maintained schools or grant-maintained special schools under this section may, in such circumstances as may be prescribed, include such terms as to payment as may be prescribed'.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

Schedule 9

MAKING AND MAINTENANCE OF STATEMENTS UNDER SECTION 155

Amendment made: No. 139, in page 182, line 35, leave out from 'after' to end of line 40 and insert—

'(i) a request under this paragraph,
(ii) the service of a copy of the statement under paragraph 6 above,
(iii) if the statement has been amended, the date when notice of the amendment is given under paragraph 10(3)(b) below, or
(iv) if the parent has appealed to the Tribunal under section 157 of this Act or this paragraph, the date when the appeal is concluded,

whichever is the later'.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

Schedule 10

GOVERNMENT AND CONDUCT OF GRANT-MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Amendment made: No. 140, in page 187, leave out lines 35 to 41 and insert—

'( ) there is a report of an inspection of the school in which the person who made it expressed the opinion that special measures were required to be taken in relation to the school,
( ) either that person was a member of the Inspectorate or the report stated that the Chief Inspector agreed with his opinion,
( ) if any registered inspector or member of the Inspectorate has made a later report of an inspection of the school under Chapter I of Part V of this Act, he

did not express the opinion in the report that special measures were not required to be taken in relation to the school, and

( ) the Secretary of State has received a statement prepared under section 193 of this Act or the period allowed by subsection (2) of that section for the preparation of such a statement has expired;

and expressions used in this sub-paragraph and in that Part have the same meaning as in that Part'.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

Clause 171

MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL BECOMING GRANT-MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOL

Amendment made: No. 137, in page 102, line 21, leave out 'such date as may be specified in the proposals' and insert 'the date of approval'.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

Clause 178

SPECIFICATION OF SCHOOLS IN NOTICES UNDER SECTION177(2)

Amendments made: No. 131, in page 107, line 29, leave out paragraph (b) and insert—

'(b) if another local education authority are responsible for determining the arrangements for the admission of pupils to the school, that authority.'.

No. 132, in page 107, line 36, leave out paragraph (b) and insert—

'(b) if another local education authority are responsible for determining the arrangements for the admission of pupils to the school, that authority.'.—*[Mr. Forth.]*

Further consideration of the Bill stood adjourned.

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered this day.

BROADCASTING

Ordered,

That Mr. Gordon McMaster be discharged from the Select Committee on Broadcasting and Mr. John Gunnell be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

British Rail Maintenance Ltd. (Eastleigh)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

12.1 am

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): I am extremely grateful for this opportunity to raise an issue of fundamental concern to my constituency. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for agreeing to reply to the debate, because I know that he has spent a very arduous day in the Committee considering the Railways Bill.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to pass on to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport my thanks for the visit that he paid to the railway maintenance yard at Eastleigh last September. I know that he is very aware of the problems that the works faces, and I am appreciative of the help that my hon. Friend has already given.

John Arlott, the well-known cricket commentator and Hampshire personality, was asked 30 years ago to comment on Eastleigh. His reply was a bit double-edged, but I will repeat it:

"Anyone who admires Eastleigh seems to me like the character evoked by a modern poet—

'As fond as a plain woman's lovers
Of charms that the world does not see.'

But Eastleigh has a heart, a huge fiery, steam-pulsed, hammer-beating heart."

The heart of Eastleigh is its railway maintenance works, which is the subject of this debate.

Since 1891, when the London and South-Western railway—an efficient and wisely managed private company—decided to bring its wagon and carriage works from south London to Eastleigh, the works has been the heart of the town. That is particularly so since 1909, when the company decided to move the locomotive building works there also.

Today, 1,400 of my constituents are employed at the Eastleigh works, and hundreds more elsewhere on the railways. The works is still the biggest employer in the town. Hundreds more—employees' families, shopkeepers and businesses—depend on the works for their livelihood or welfare. It is vital to my constituency that British Rail Maintenance Ltd. continues as a prosperous and successful employer.

BRML is not some antiquated nationalised industry but a well-run and efficient nationalised industry. It has a first-class record. Every year for the past five years the works has been able, because of its efficiency, to reduce its charges to the railway by 2·5 per cent. It is flexible, and because its work force has a wide range of skills, the works can adapt in times of crisis. Perhaps the most striking example of that happened two years ago, when thousands of passengers were delayed by the famous wrong type of snow. That situation was dealt with: they got the right kind of maintenance at Eastleigh. The work force worked 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and managed to repair all the electric motors that had been damaged; very soon, trains were back in service. Had it not been for the large, flexible and skilled work force at Eastleigh, that might not have been possible. The work is done with increasing rapidity. Work on the light-maintenance trains can be turned around within three days.

Eastleigh is also remarkable for the good relations between management and work force. I am glad to say that representatives of both are here tonight to listen to the debate.

[Mr. Stephen Milligan]

Despite that record of achievement, jobs—alas—are at risk in the rail maintenance yards. There are two reasons for that. First, the recession has meant a reduction in the use of trains on the network, and therefore a reduced need for maintenance; secondly—rather ironically—the Government's investment programme means that new rolling stock is coming on stream which requires less maintenance. For example, the new trains with sliding doors need much less maintenance than the old slam-door trains. There is a serious risk that many BRML workers will lose their jobs in the years ahead, whatever happens as a result of privatisation.

I sought the opportunity to speak tonight, before the Government have made any decisions about privatisation as it affects the maintenance sector, to ensure that they are aware of the concern that is felt. It is precisely because jobs are at risk and the welfare of my constituency is threatened that I hope the Government will consider very seriously, before making any decisions on privatisation, the effect on the work force and my constituents.

The company recently announced that it had asked the management consultants McKinsey and Co. to establish the best solutions and the best way forward. I welcome that decision: McKinsey is a first-rate company, and I think that its advice could be most helpful. I note from its remit, however, that it has been asked to consider not only the best form of maintenance and what is best for the railways, but what is best for the employees. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us tonight that McKinsey will consider the employees' concerns, and will be prepared to meet the trade unions before making its recommendations.

I am principally concerned about the possible effects of the general privatisation of the network on railway maintenance. If the new franchisees are simply given terms of five, six or seven years to run the railways, they will naturally be tempted to cut corners—not to carry out proper maintenance, and to allow longer periods to elapse between maintenance sessions. That would not only be bad for the railways and for passengers; clearly, it would be extremely disadvantageous for my constituents who work for BRML.

I was very encouraged by a letter that my hon. Friend the Minister of State wrote to me last week in which he said that one option being considered by the Government was a special relationship between BRML and the new company set up to own the rolling stock—a company that would obviously have an interest in maintaining the quality of rolling stock, and would not be tempted to cut corners. I hope that the Government will explore that option further, with the aim of ensuring that corners are not cut in maintenance, and that the interests of BRML's employees in Eastleigh are taken fully into account.

I want to raise a number of points that are concerning my constituents and those who work at BRML; I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister can answer them. The first relates to the time scale. For three or four years, those who work at BRML have been in suspense: they have not known what their future is. They have been worried about job losses; they do not know whether BRML will remain a separate company, or whether it will be privatised. Can my hon. Friend give us some idea when a decision will be made so that those workers will know their future?

Secondly, will my hon. Friend confirm that BRML in Eastleigh will probably continue to be the main centre for the long-term maintenance of Southern region trains, whoever owns or runs them?

Thirdly, will he deal with an issue that troubles many of my constituents—the future of their pensions? That concerns both those who work on the railways now and the thousands who have retired. Last Saturday, I held a meeting in my constituency to discuss the issue: it was attended by 300 or 400 pensioners, who were extremely concerned about some of the misleading newspaper reports that they had read, implying that the Government might do a Maxwell and filch the pension fund. I should like an assurance not only that the value of pensions will be maintained but that pensioners, especially BRML pensioners, will in no way be disadvantaged by privatisation. They have paid their contributions and are entitled to the full pensions which they have earned during their working lives.

If the Government decide to privatise BRML, I should like to put a number of points on the record. Will the Government make it their objective to ensure that there is a level playing field? There has been considerable concern in recent months because some of the electric traction motors which are overhauled at Eastleigh have been put out to tender without BRML having a chance to put in a bid. There should be a level playing field, but there is concern that some work might go to other depots. My constituents accept that the railway demands the best price, service and conditions, but they want to be reassured that they will have the benefit of competing on equal terms with other companies and depots which may want to do the work.

If privatisation occurs, will the Minister make every effort to ensure that any new company is well managed and that some of the lessons of what went wrong at British Rail Engineering Ltd. are learnt before new arrangements are made for BRML?

Privatisation will clearly bring benefits to the railway —as my hon. Friend the Minister knows, I support privatisation—but there will also be costs. I am concerned to ensure that those costs do not fall disproportionately on my constituents. In that respect, I should like those who work at BRML to gain some clear benefits if it is privatised. Would it be possible to have a shareholding scheme so that if the company prospers those who work there reap the benefit instead of it going to an outside organisation which merely bought it?

I have in mind the favourable experience of another company in my constituency, the shipbuilders Vosper Thornycroft, which was successfully privatised 10 years ago. It has doubled its productivity and has the largest order book in its history. It is one of the few defence firms in the south of England which is recruiting workers. It has been able to offer its employees shares in the company —about half have accepted—so they have drawn a direct benefit from the company's success. With the same thought in mind, would it be possible to expand the work for which BRML can bid? At the moment it is limited to trains on the Southern region. Could it bid for work elsewhere on the railway network or possibly for work in other sectors? The Minister may know that during the war the Eastleigh works produced bomb trolleys and worked on assault craft and a variety of other wartime needs. It is flexible and could do work for other industries.

Will the Minister offer some words of encouragement and assurance to my constituents? They are extremely worried about what will happen to their jobs. Unemployment in Eastleigh has traditionally been very low, but it has almost tripled in the past two years. The town of Eastleigh is very dependent on the railways. There is an air of uncertainty. We should be most grateful if the Minister could offer assurances that will enable my constituents and those who work at BRML to believe that they have a sound future.

I support the Government's privatisation programme because I believe that it will lead to greater use of the railways, which is what my constituents want. If any change to BRML can be managed in such a way that it benefits not only the railways but the employees, it will help the constituents of the railway town that I am proud to represent.

12.12 am

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) and to the Minister for allowing me to make a brief contribution to this important debate. Many of my constituents work at British Rail Maintenance Ltd. and will also be listening carefully to the answers that the Minister will give. I shall be brief because I am as keen as anyone to hear the answers to the specific questions that have been asked.

I emphasise two points of particular importance. First, BRML is a public asset. Whether the Government intend to keep it in the public sector or move it to the private sector, it is in the public interest to ensure that it has a sound future. It is therefore in the public interest to ensure that no short-term actions are taken, or are allowed to be taken, which undermine BRML's ability to meet the heavy engineering needs of the railway network in the south-east and nationally.

How British Rail is privatised, if the Government persist in their intention to privatise it, and the links between the way it is privatised and the maintenance operations are critical to BRML's future.

I am one of those who believe that BRML's future will not be bright if it is left as an isolated unit, not integrated into the rest of the rail network, and I hope that the Minister will be able to give an assurance that BRML will not be left on its own to sink but will be linked in a positive way to the franchise operators—and ideally to those who will be operating services in the south-east—or to Railtrack, or to the leasing company that was referred to earlier.

I also hope that the Minister can give an assurance that BRML's core long-term viability will not be undermined by allowing light maintenance depots to asset-strip work which may be short term and profitable but which could end up by putting BRML out of business and denying the railway network the skills and expertise that exist at that important depot.

12.15 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Steve Norris): I start by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) on securing the debate. I am grateful to him for conveying his good wishes to my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport, who, sadly, cannot be with us. I know that one of the things that my hon. Friend the Minister would have wanted to say is that we and our colleagues in the Department have been impressed by the consistent way in which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh has maintained his interest in the railworks in Eastleigh and has assiduously and constantly pressed us for the sort of assurance that he hopes to obtain from me this evening. The evidence for that is his consistent efforts to secure this Adjournment debate.

I am happy to join my hon. Friend's name with that of the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham), who asked to intervene on behalf of his constituents. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), who I know is also keenly interested in the future of the railways in Great Britain, and the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson), who leads for the Opposition on these matters, are also here.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh said, Eastleigh has a proud railway tradition. The locomotive works there was opened on the present site, as my hon. Friend doubtless knows, in 1910, for construction and repair of London and South-Western Railway locomotives. Today the works handles repairs and modifications to BR's fleet of multiple units and locomotives, especially the Network SouthEast stock. The aim of BRML is to achieve rapid turn-round times and get vehicles back into service quickly.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Public Transport visited Eastleigh with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh last September, he was impressed by the skills and adaptability of the BRML work force and, as my hon. Friend noted, the willingness of the work force to work constructively with management in producing a first-class product.

Eastleigh works has recently gained its British Standard quality certificate of which it can be justifiably proud. Over the years the Eastleigh work force has proved that it is capable of tackling any task that comes its way, displaying craftsmanship and achieving customer satisfaction of a very high order. I am sure that its good record will serve it well in the future. My hon. Friend is entirely right to want to clarify the future of all four of the BRML works as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend will know that, following the sale of BREL, the Eastleigh, Glasgow, Doncaster and Wolverton works became part of a new BR subsidiary—which is known as British Rail Maintenance Limited, and is responsible for heavy maintenance work for British Rail. That followed the board's decision that the design and supply of new traction and rolling stock should be competitively sourced from private manufacturers, with maintenance being undertaken in BR workshops on the basis of a component exchange system. That maintenance work is not, at present, put out to competitive tender, although components removed in BR workshops are overhauled externally following competitive tendering.

The Government's policy is that BR should widen private sector involvement in maintenance. We are still considering the options for BRML depots, but have made it clear that we see benefits in involving the private sector in the heavy repair work currently carried out by BRML. Private contractors do, of course, already carry out some heavier repair and refurbishment work for BR.

A number of options for the future of BRML are under consideration. One option would be to sell off BRML, either as a whole or by major individual depots, through

[Mr. Steve Norris]

trade sales or through management-led employee buy-outs. BR and other rail operators would then contract for heavy maintenance. Although the outright sale of BRML has attractions, it might pose serious competition problems. Where major overhauls and repairs are concerned, the monopoly power of an individual depot would be less, provided that the individual works were distributed among different owners so that an effective monopoly was not established. But even if the elements were sold separately, it might be difficult or too expensive for a railway operator to use other than the nearest depot, particularly in the case of the electric third rail network.

A second option might be to transfer individual depots to that part of the railway which is their major customer. That might make sense in the case of the BRML Glasgow works and the ScotRail franchisee. But it might be less appropriate in the case of Eastleigh, given its wide role in servicing Network SouthEast stock south of the Thames, and the fact that more than one franchisee would be involved.

Many franchisees may, of course, want to lease their rolling stock. My hon. Friend made that point, and I shall return to it in a moment. Some may wish to do so through a simple finance lease so that the franchisee does his own maintenance. Others may wish to concentrate their efforts purely on marketing. For them, rolling stock lessors might offer rolling stock on a fully maintained basis, recovering their costs through rolling stock leasing charges. The lessor in turn could either contract out maintenance or supply it from in-house resources. Either route could make use of the valuable expertise and experience which currently resides in BRML. Some combination of those three options may prove appropriate, depending on the circumstances. Above all, we must retain flexibility to meet the emerging requirements of future operators.

My hon. Friend is right to identify the sort of relationship that might exist in future between BRML and a publicly owned company established for the purpose of leasing railway stock. Certainly that would avoid the risk, if their were to be a risk, of short cutting by any individual franchisee on long-term maintenance, the effect of which might be beyond the immediate terms of the initial franchise.

As my hon. Friend says, British Rail has appointed McKinsey as consultants to advise on the future of BRML and the Level 5 group of depots. I understand that the trades unions have been advised by BR of the terms of reference for the work. The remit is to consider what options exist in the light of the Government's emerging plans for BR privatisation and to report to BR in the spring. I confirm to my hon. Friend that the terms of reference for the McKinsey study specifically require the study to have regard to the interests of employees of BRML and of the Level 5 group of depots. We look forward to receiving the board's proposals for the future of its heavy maintenance depots. In that context, I must add that it would be inconceivable, to my mind, if in the course of its investigation and the preparation of the report McKinsey were not formally to meet the trade unions as part of that process.

I recognise that uncertainty about the future is causing anxiety among BRML workers. We will make an announcement as quickly as we can. Meanwhile, we are giving further consideration to the relationship between rolling stock, franchising and access to maintenance facilities. The need to secure adequate maintenance facilities will be an important factor for franchisees, and could be a barrier to entry for new operators.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh and the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen asked several other specific questions which I shall attempt to answer in the time available. My hon. Friend asked that if privatisation took place there should be clear benefits for employees —such as, employee shareholding schemes and the opportunity to bid for a wider range of work. We shall certainly encourage employees to take a direct stake in the future of a franchised or privatised business in which they work. My hon. Friend will know that the BREL sale, for example, included an employee shareholding scheme. I am also pleased to confirm that a privatised BRML would have the opportunity to bid for a wider range of work. It would compete in the private sector on a level playing field.

BREL's experience demonstrates the greater repair opportunities that will be available following privatisation. For example, although British Rail and London Underground Ltd. remain the major customers, BREL —which is now ABB Transportation—has won significant contracts from various industrial sectors, including defence, utilities, the construction industry and transport operators. That sort of widening of the customer base must be beneficial to a company and its employees.

I should like to say a few words about the level playing field to which my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh referred. I understand that the BREL sale agreement contains legal limitations on what BR repairers can bid for. Certainly, that is an issue which would need to be addressed by BR before any sale of BRML. If Eastleigh were transferred to the private sector, the intention would be that it would compete fairly on a level playing field with other companies in the private sector. It will be important to ensure that franchisees and any rolling stock leasing companies have access to the full range of maintenance facilities.

My hon. Friend wanted an assurance that a privatised BRML would have top-quality management in order to take it forward. I am sure that he will agree with me that one of the benefits of privatisation is that railway management will be more free to get on with what it considers are priorities.

Obviously, the terms and conditions of the sale will be a matter for British Rail. The Secretary of State's role in that context is to give formal consent to the sale. The terms on which the sale will be offered make it clear that there would certainly be top-quality management available to BRML in a privatised form.

I shall spend a moment on the important matter of pensions which my hon. Friend raised. I regret that an emotive issue of such crucial importance has affected many thousands of people who are getting on in years and who are, understandably, worried, especially in the wake of the absolutely scandalous treatment of the employees belonging to pension funds in the control of the late Mr. Maxwell. It is quite reprehensible that pensioners in that circumstance should be worried by the sort of stories which have been going around suggesting that the Government might employ the technique ascribed to the late Mr. Maxwell when dealing with pensioners.

Let me make one thing clear. We accepted the rail unions' suggestion that a joint industry pension scheme

should succeed the present BR schemes after privatisation. We made it clear that the joint industry scheme will offer pension benefits which are "no less favourable" than the BR scheme for the staff transferring. We made it clear that successor employers who choose to leave the joint industry scheme will be required to make alternative arrangements which are "no less favourable" to meet that criterion.

Far from there being any intention to plunder the assets of the BR scheme, we have given two clear options to the trustees of the scheme as to how they want to see the future management of pensions for present and future BR pensioners. I give my hon. Friend an assurance which I am sure he accepts. The Government are not the slightest bit interested in making political capital out of this at the expense of some of the most vulnerable in society—the elderly who have genuine concerns about such issues and who are, understandably, concerned when they read some of the irresponsible reporting in the newspapers.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Norris: I have only three minutes, but, as I have dealt with all except one of the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh raised, I shall be delighted to allow the hon. Gentleman to intervene if he will be quick.

Mr. Wilson: I shall be extremely quick. We could solve a lot of people's worries if the Minister would give us an assurance that £4·25 billion will not be transferred from the British Rail pension fund to the Treasury under any circumstances.

Mr. Norris: This is my hon. Friend's debate. I know that the hon. Gentleman is aware of the traditions of the House. He knows that I cannot digress into the issue that he raises except to say that he is aware that the Government made two clear options available to the trustees of the BR pension scheme. One involves the Government guaranteeing the payment of pensions, and thus taking over the assets of the scheme. The other involves the trustees determining a private arrangement which may well result in the pension scheme performing as well or perhaps even better. It has performed extremely well in the past.

I give the hon. Gentleman an unequivocal assurance that if the BR pension scheme trustees choose the latter course, the Government will respect that course and, indeed, urge it on the pensioners. It is important that the pensioners should listen to independent financial advice and take only the best quality advice available to them on the subject. I know that it is just as important to pensioners at Eastleigh as to pensioners everywhere else in the railway system.

Perhaps the most important point is that we are confident that, following BR privatisation, Eastleigh will be required to continue to use the well-established and extremely well-respected facilities at Eastleigh. That will make eminently good economic sense for operators in southern England—both franchisees and the residual BR. To train new staff to carry out maintenance functions is likely to be neither practicable nor economical in the required time scale. I am sure that the simple logic of that is the reassurance that the work force at BRML at Eastleigh seek. I am certain that successor companies and contractors will look for and require the considerable skills of the present work force.

I hope that in the time available I have managed to cover all the points that my hon. Friend raised. I assure him that if there are any other points on which he seeks further clarification I or my hon. Friend the Minister for Public Transport will be happy to write to him.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 3 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ALLIANCE & LEICESTER (GIROBANK) BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Primary School Buildings

2. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the capital spend on primary school building works in Scotland in 1992; and what was the figure in 1979, adjusted to 1992 prices.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): Information on capital expenditure on primary schools is not available separately.

Mr. Kynoch: I welcome the recent additional funding given to Grampian regional council, which has enabled it to prevent the closure of—and to rebuild—a rural primary school at Logie Coldstone in my constituency. The doubling of many primary school rolls in my constituency in recent years has placed a significant strain on buildings, which require rebuild and extension. Does my hon. Friend recognise the importance of primary schools, particularly to rural communities, in which they play a key part? Does he further recognise that Grampian regional council has paid insufficient attention to the growing population of Kincardine and Deeside? Will he urge it to put that matter right at the earliest opportunity?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend raises an important point. Rising pupil numbers is an issue which should be properly taken into account by the regional council as it comes under the council's jurisdiction. I am glad that progress has been made at Logie Coldstone primary school. My hon. Friend's constituency is suffering from the benefits associated with success, which brings in its wake problems which should be borne in mind by the regional council.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Minister aware of the vigorous campaign in Ayr to keep Castlehill primary school open? The campaign has the support of the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) and me, so it must be right. If the campaign is successful, the temporary buildings will be inadequate. Will the Minister therefore given an assurance that Strathclyde regional council will be allowed capital building consent to ensure that a new purpose-built school is provided for the pupils of Castlehill?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: In distributing allocations to the regions, account is taken, as far as possible, of the needs throughout Scotland. Councils can supplement their education building programme by the use of capital receipts from the disposal of assets, by the use of revenue expenditure on capital works and by transferring resources from other capital programmes. The issues raised by the hon. Gentleman, which also apply to many other parts of Scotland, will be borne in mind.

Rural Housing

3. **Mr. Wallace:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next intends to meet the chairman of Scottish Homes to discuss rural housing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and I met the chairman of Scottish Homes in January to discuss a number of issues, including rural housing.

Mr. Wallace: It is now two and a half years since, with a great fanfare, Scottish Homes launched its rural housing strategy. Does the Minister regard the more than 7,000 homelessness applications in rural and remote areas of Scotland in the past complete year as a sign of a strategy that is working? While Scottish Homes may have made a laudable effort to concentrate on 10 demonstration projects, they will not be of much use unless the lessons learnt can be applied to other rural regions of Scotland. When will Scottish Homes do that, and will the Government provide it with the resources to do so?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am glad to report that Scottish Homes' programme for rural areas of Scotland will include more than £55 million—an increase of almost 22 per cent. over the planned expenditure for last year. That represents about one fifth of the total development programme. Scottish Homes is giving priority to the issue of homelessness in a number of ways. It has said that 7,000 units will be made available for waiting-list applicants and the statutorily homeless, and is developing a series of initiatives which I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will welcome, including one for £2 million to be made available for three years for furniture grants to housing associations.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my hon. Friend confirm that Scottish Homes is a major beneficiary of the autumn statement? Will he also confirm that a local authority should sell as many council houses as possible because it can reinvest all the proceeds during the current financial year?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can confirm that Scottish Homes benefited considerably from the autumn statement when a £250 million debt was written off. Processing council house sales can be a substantial advantage and Scottish Homes does that to the benefit of its programmes.

Mrs. Fyfe: When, on 17 February, the Minister cut next year's housing support grants to three quarters of the current year's, was he aware of the shocking findings of the Scottish Homes survey into the condition of Scottish housing which was posted to Members of Parliament on 22 February? Was he aware on 17 February that some

94,000 dwellings failed to meet the tolerable standard, 32,000 of them in rural areas and 62,000 in urban areas? Did he also know that one fifth of Scotland's housing stock has damp, condensation or mould? Whether or not he knew then, he knows now. What does he intend to do about it?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes is facilitating repairs or replacements of 1,000 below tolerable standard houses per year through the housing associations and other suppliers in Scotland. Since 1979, more than £1 billion has been spent on improvement grants and local authorities can target their resources on below tolerable standard housing. The house condition survey made it clear that 2 per cent. of Scotland's houses are suffering from severe damp and condensation and we shall give top priority to eradicating that as soon as possible.

Constitutional Change

4. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what speeches he has made in his ministerial capacity in 1993 on the subject of constitutional change in Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): None.

Mr. Salmond: It sounds as though the Secretary of State has been in constitutional purdah. Is there anything in the "taking stock" proposals which has not already been leaked to the press? If not, they seem to be mainly about increasing the Secretary of State's job description. Does the right hon. Gentleman not understand that there is a world of difference between increasing the democratic power of the Scottish nation and increasing the Secretary of State for Scotland's personal power of patronage? Will he undertake to put his proposals against independence in Europe and against devolution to the Scottish people in a constitutional referendum? If not, why not?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman will need to contain his impatience for a little longer; he will then discover precisely what our proposals include. But let me reassure him nothing in our proposals will do anything to undermine the integrity of the United Kingdom or Scotland's place in it.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the arrogance of the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) in this matter defies belief? Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that at every general election without exception the Scottish Conservative party has returned more Members of Parliament to the House than has the Scottish National party, and that with our history, our record of commitment and our geographic spread of representation it is the Conservative party which is Scotland's national party?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Scottish National party talks readily about democracy, but I invite it to accept the verdict of the electorate who at the general election reduced its parliamentary representation by 40 per cent.

Mr. McAllion: Does the Secretary of State begin to comprehend that constitutional change is not an end in itself but a means to an end? Does he not understand that 75 per cent. of Scottish voters want their own Parliament not for its own sake but because it frees them to make their own decisions about the future of Scottish water, Scottish local government and Scotland's railway system? Will he at least try to understand that whatever he announces next week about the stock-taking process, unless it frees Scottish democracy from the chains of the Westminster Parliament it will be decisively and deservedly rejected by the mass of the Scottish people?

Mr. Lang: I know that the hon. Gentleman is a member of that small band, Scotland United, and a great evangeliser for his cause. I am indebted to *The Scotsman*, which points out:

"Scotland United has a new friend in the redoubtable form of none other than Fidel Castro, the president of Cuba."

On their return from a visit to Cuba, the doughty trio concluded:

"We had two hours with him and he was really interested in what Scotland United was about."

They added:

"Which is more than we've had from John Smith."

Mr. Dickens: Can my right hon. Friend explain the Scottish National party's continual obsession with breaking up the United Kingdom? Is it not a fact that a united Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland comprises one of the most influential and powerful nations in the world? Would not a fragmented Scotland become like a big county council? That is not what Scotland or Great Britain wants—we want the Union.

Mr. Lang: I absolutely endorse every word said by my hon. Friend. We on this side of the House are proud not only of what Scotland has derived from the Union but of the benefits that Scotland has brought to the Union.

Sir David Steel: Is the Secretary of State aware that any company which took as long to stock take as he has done would be in compulsory liquidation by now? Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the extent of his tinkering with our business arrangements over the next week or two will be no substitute for allowing the people of Scotland to determine their constitutional future?

Mr. Lang: The right hon. Gentleman talks about the time that we have taken. We have been thorough and careful in our deliberations. I note that Labour has not even begun to take stock.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Secretary of State recall that of the 72 Members of Parliament representing Scottish constituencies, three support independence, 11 support the Conservative party, and 49—a very clear majority—represent the Labour party and support a Parliament within the United Kingdom? Does the Secretary of State intend to consult the people of Scotland? If not, will he accept the Bill that we shall present in the coming weeks and submit these matters to a referendum so that the people of Scotland can decide their future?

Mr. Lang: No, we will not. I know that the hon. Gentleman is trying hard to cobble together some kind of unity among his divided Back Benchers, but to suggest that the secretary-general of the Scottish Trades Union Congress can somehow act as an honest broker over the future of the Scottish Constitutional Convention is to clutch at straws. I know that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) supports that approach,

but the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) described it as a non-starter and the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) described it as a red herring. I do not have much hope for the prospects of unity in those discussions.

Local Government

5. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his timetable and what are the proposals he expects to implement in connection with legislation concerning local government in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My Department is currently analysing the responses to our consultation paper on local government reform, and the Government will take account of those responses when we make our decision on the new structure of unitary authorities in Scotland. We intend to publish a White Paper this summer setting out our proposals.

Mr. Shaw: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the strange and undemocratic practices of Monklands district council under Labour. Can he give an assurance that the legislative changes that he proposes will deal with them? In view of the Labour party's own admission that those practices are wrong, can my right hon. Friend further assure me that the £75 million of taxpayers' money spent annually by Monklands district council is properly spent? What does he think of the letter written to me the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), about the £200,000 of Monklands and taxpayers' money that has gone astray in the last few years?

Mr. Lang: I will want to consider the points that my hon. Friend put to me. Certainly the Labour party is in my hon. Friend's debt, because it was as a result of his interest in the matter that Labour established its own inquiry—the future of which we look forward to learning tomorrow. I hope that at that stage Members of Parliament who represent Monklands constituencies will finally take a close interest in the matter. After all, the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said in a recent speech on standards in government:

> "Having the same party in power for fourteen years, and the abuses of that power which we now witness, have served to expose serious systemic weaknesses."

Unemployment

6. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairs of the local enterprise companies in Scotland to discuss unemployment in their areas.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): My right hon. Friend and I frequently meet chairmen of local enterprise companies to discuss a range of economic development and training issues.

Mr. Ross: How can LEC chairmen make plans for training, or deal with unemployment, when companies behave like Timex in Dundee, which sacked all its workers in the middle of a dispute? What have the Minister and the Secretary of State been able to do about the abuse of employment legislation that that company has visited on 343 workers since I raised the matter last Thursday?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman has indeed raised the matter with my right hon. Friend and me. As I believe, he knows, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service stands ready to assist if both parties to the dispute agree. That has not happened so far, but I know that the local enterprise company in his area is widely supported by the private sector and by local authorities.

Mr. Gallie: Will my hon. Friend accept the thanks of all Ayrshire Members for the tremendous achievement of Scottish Enterprise in retaining Digital in the constituency of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), which is adjacent to mine, thus saving some 1,000 jobs? Scottish Enterprise deserves our compliments.

Mr. Stewart: I find myself in an unusual position: not only do I agree with my hon. Friend, which is fairly usual, but I endorse the public tribute paid by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) to Locate in Scotland, which worked extremely hard to ensure the continuation of that highly successful operation in Ayrshire. I am sure that it will go from success to success.

Ms. Rachel Squire: Is the Minister aware that Fife Enterprise is struggling to deal with the second highest unemployment rate in Scotland? In south and east Rosyth, for instance, it has already reached 12·1 and 12·5 per cent. respectively, and unless the submarine refitting order is awarded to Rosyth dockyard it will soon be 30 per cent. or even higher. When does the Minister intend to meet representatives of Fife Enterprise—and, indeed, Fife regional council—to discuss the creation of jobs for the Fife area? When does he feel confident that he will be able to celebrate the award of the refitting order to Rosyth, thus saving 18,000 jobs related directly and indirectly to the dockyard and ensuring that they have a future in the Fife area?

Mr. Stewart: The whole House will understand the hon. Lady's concern about what is an important matter for her constituency. As she knows, I am a Fifer myself. She will also know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is carefully considering the position of the dockyards. I assure her that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I are in constant touch with Fife Enterprise, and we have every confidence in that body. It is widely supported, by the private sector, the regional council and the district councils.

Mr. Fabricant: Is my hon. Friend aware that Opposition Members, as well as myself, attended a meeting of Nomura International, the well-known Japanese merchant bank? Is he aware that Nomura identified the social chapter as the single factor which would increase unemployment throughout the United Kingdom? Does my hon. Friend not find it amazing that Labour supports the social chapter?

Mr. Stewart: I note from the cheers of Labour Members how strongly they agree with the sensible point made by my hon. Friend. Having been in Japan for a time last September——

Mr. Eric Clarke: Not in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: Let me tell the hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) that Japanese companies in Lothian provide an enormous number of jobs and are constantly expanding and investing. I hoped that Opposition Members would join me in welcoming that.

Mrs. Ray Michie: Has the Minister had an opportunity to meet the chairman of Argyll and the Islands local enterprise company to discuss the effect on unemployment in Argyll and Bute of the announcement that it was to be excluded from objective 1 status?

Mrs. Ewing: And Moray.

Mrs. Michie: And the effect on Moray, Arran and various other places. What has happened? Why has there been such confusion? Whose fault was it? Can the Minister assure us that Argyll and Bute will be included in objective 1 status when the matter goes before the Council of Ministers?

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate the hon. Lady's point. As I think she will know, the territorial definitions are made by the European Commission itself. She will also know that the Government have consistently made the case for the whole highlands and islands enterprise area.

Mr. Harris: Reverting to the question asked by the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms. Squire), does my hon. Friend accept that those of us who have the honour and privilege to represent the south-west of England look at the question of the dockyards from a very different point of view and that we maintain firmly that, on any objective assessment, the submarine refitting order should go to Devonport?

Mr. Stewart: I have no doubt that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence will read my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Connarty: Returning to the question of the enterprise boards in Scotland, has the Minister had an opportunity to discuss with Forth Valley Enterprise and other enterprise schemes around Grangemouth port the deep concern that they feel about the dirty tricks which appear to have been played against the Forth ports, including Grangemouth, by Scottish Enterprise? Is he aware that the report compiled by PEIDA did not include a substantial number of facilities at the ports? It would appear that Locate in Scotland and Scottish Enterprise are attempting to sell the idea of a port at Rosyth, which might be welcome, by doing down and hiding from people facilities at the port of Grangemouth and elsewhere which have already received substantial investment. I have written to the Secretary of State for Scotland about this. Has the issue been raised with him by the enterprise board chairman?

Mr. Stewart: I am aware of the hon. Gentleman's letter to my right hon. Friend. Scottish Enterprise has been involved in a study of a possible port development at Rosyth; I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is apparently opposed to Scottish Enterprise considering developments which might involve net additional jobs for Scotland.

Local Services

7. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of COSLA to discuss the provision of local services.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend met the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on 18 January. Further meetings, as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters, will be held later this year.

Mr. McMaster: Is the Minister aware that while he spends his time trying to save Tory Eastwood district council from the effects of his own reforms, the people of Scotland spend their time worrying about the bread and butter issues that they face daily, such as damp, decaying housing, the upsurge in violent crime, the lack of proper community policing, the threat of water privatisation and the Government's failure to prepare properly for the community care of our elderly and disabled people? As they are all vital local services which are in the hands of local government, why does the Minister waste so much time trying to dismantle and destroy local government instead of strengthening and supporting it?

Mr. Stewart: Aggregate external finance for local government in Scotland for the forthcoming year is £1,013 per head, compared with £690 per head in England and £812 per head in Wales. That is not destruction; that is a massive investment by the British taxpayer in local authority expenditure in Scotland, which is far higher than anywhere else in the country.

The hon. Gentleman asked some specific questions. He will know that Scottish Homes is taking action in Foxbar. With regard to his concern about the policing of his constituency, why does not he take up with Labour Strathclyde regional council the fact that consistently, over a long period, it has been the only police authority in Scotland to keep its police manpower below the Scottish Office authorised level?

Mr. Bill Walker: When my hon. Friend meets representatives of COSLA will he draw attention to the article in the *Glasgow Herald* which said that the Monklands mafia were to be taken to an industrial tribunal by those great friends of the Conservative party, the Transport and General Workers Union? Is not it about time that something was done about what is going on in that district council?

Mr. Stewart: I know my hon. Friend's concern about those matters. His concern is shared by the Labour party —with the notable exception of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke). We all hope that the inquiry will come to sensible conclusions. We have received many letters of complaint about what is going on in Monklands. I hope for the support of Opposition Members in wishing the Transport and General Workers Union well in its complaint to the industrial tribunal.

Mr. Wray: I notice that the Minister carefully did not refer to water privatisation when he answered the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster). The Scottish Minister with responsibility for agriculture and environment was more forthcoming when he replied to a letter from my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross). He suggested that the Government intend there to be meter options in April

1993, but the Minister has not mentioned that. May I give him a message from the people of Scotland? We do not want meters; we do not want water privatisation. If the Government franchise or privatise water the 49 Scottish Members of Parliament intend to take it back into public ownership.

Mr. Stewart: I always listen to what the hon. Gentleman says, because he lives in a part of my constituency in which I cannot afford to live. I assure him that I completely support what my hon. Friend said in his letter. My hon. Friend will be answering a question on the subject shortly.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Does the Minister recall that he failed to answer the serious question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South about community care? Does he agree that the concerns are widely shared throughout Scotland—concerns about elderly people and the care gap in residential and nursing homes, concerns about people leaving long-stay psychiatric hospitals and going into the community, and concerns about the multiply handicapped? Local authorities must address those issues, because of the changes that will happen on 1 April. In view of the absence of proper funding, how do the Government intend to deal with those matters—or do they intend to leave elderly, disabled and handicapped people and their carers with the impression that the Government simply have no strategy whatever and have even ignored the report from Sir Roy Griffiths, who warned them that if they did not act, chaos would prevail in community care?

Mr. Stewart: The House expected the hon. Gentleman to defend Monklands district council and its employment policies and religious discrimination. Does the hon. Gentleman not defend every action of Monklands district council? I see that he sits silent and I am not surprised. In answer to his specific question, the Government have increased the resources for community care by more than the Department of Social Security would have spent in Scotland. The commitment to community care is absolutely clear and has been backed by massive extra resources.

Legal Aid

8. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people received legal aid in each of the last five years.

Mr. Lang: In 1987-88, there were 305,148 grants of legal aid and advice and assistance. This rose to 366,580 in 1991-92—an increase of just over 20 per cent. in five years. I will, with permission, Madam Speaker, arrange for the detailed numbers for the last five years to be printed in the *Official Report* and sent to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Ingram: I am grateful to the Secretary of State for that information. Can he say why the Government, having gone some of the way towards reinstating the eligibility criteria for legal advice and assistance, are not prepared to go the whole way and raise the £44 threshold for eligibility for free civil legal aid? Why are the Government determined to deny easy access to justice for people on low incomes such as the disabled, pensioners and others with low basic incomes? Do not they care about justice in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: Indeed we do, and those on income support levels will continue to receive free civil legal aid and advice and assistance. As the hon. Gentleman acknowledges, in the light of consultation, the Government have decided to retain the contributory band in the case of advice and assistance. However, the hon. Gentleman should not seek to imply—I do not think that he meant to do so—that we are somehow cutting legal aid in Scotland. Expenditure on legal aid has doubled in the past six years and we are budgeting for a 40 per cent. increase between now and 1995-96.

Mrs. Ewing: Does not the right hon. Gentleman realise that statistics provided by his own Government actually deny the figures that he has just given and that there has been very little increase in gross civil legal aid payments? The major jump has been in administrative costs. Is not the reality that changes in civil legal aid in Scotland are being tacked on to the changes in the English legal system, where there have been substantial increases? When shall we see the regulations which he is prepared to debate?

Mr. Lang: The answer to the hon. Lady's last question is shortly. In regard to comparisons with England, we would expect such issues to proceed broadly in line, taking account of the different circumstances north and south of the border. Let me assure the hon. Lady that, over the next two years, we expect that more people than ever before will receive legal aid and advice and assistance.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does the Secretary of State accept that it is a mark of a civilised society that all persons, irrespective of means, may have access to the legal system? It is perfectly clear from the proposals that he is about to bring forward that a substantial group of people who previously had access to the system through legal aid are to be denied that. Why is the Scottish Office following like a lapdog the experience in England? If the right hon. Gentleman were as independent as he claims to be, he would tell the Lord Advocate that we do not need to do in Scotland what the Lord Chancellor feels compelled to do in England and Wales.

Mr. Lang: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, we have responsibilities north of the border, just as my right hon. and hon. Friends do south of the border, for ensuring that public resources are sensibly spent with proper care and attention to the interests of the taxpayers. However, as I have said already, we expect that more than ever before, not fewer, will be able to receive legal aid and advice and assistance over the next couple of years—something like half the households in the country.

Following is the information:

	Number
1987-88	304,148
1988-89	288,904
1989-90	298,824
1990-91	328,688
1991-92	366,580

Access to Justice

9. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on equality of access to justice.

Mr. Lang: The Government are fully committed to ensuring that all citizens have, so far as possible, ready access to a high standard of justice.

Mr. Worthington: Why have not the Government published the figures on which their claims for an increase in civil legal aid are based? The figures for 1987-1992 show that there is a tiny increase and the claim for changes in the regulations is based on the figures for this year. Will the right hon. Gentleman publish those figures when he releases them to my hon. Friend the Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram)? Why are we having a cut when the citizens advice bureaux report that in significant areas of Scotland there is no civil legal aid because lawyers cannot afford to do it?

Mr. Lang: If the hon. Gentleman cares to table some specific questions, I will ensure that they are answered, giving such figures as are available. As I have said, expenditure on legal aid has doubled in the past six years from £49 million in 1987-88 to an estimated £100 million in the current year. That is a substantial increase and we are budgeting for a 40 per cent. increase by 1995-96.

Mr. Chisholm: Is the Minister aware that, over the past 20 years, many thousands of women have used legal aid to raise actions aimed at protecting themselves and their children from violence? Will the Government therefore support the campaign against domestic violence launched by Edinburgh district council's women's committee and the Edinburgh *Evening News* by ensuring that the cruel legal aid proposals are scrapped and by giving a more generous donation to Scottish Women's Aid? Its grant is not keeping up with its funding requirements and is falling behind all the time as a proportion of its total expenditure.

Mr. Lang: Our proposals will have no effect on the eligibility of that category.

Homelessness

10. **Sir Russell Johnston:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is taking to alleviate homelessness in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities have the statutory responsibility for dealing with homelessness. Their capital allocations this year total over £456 million and the Government have consistently emphasised the need to give due priority to homelessness. We have backed this up with extra capital allocations of over £22 million earmarked for homelessness projects over the period 1991 to 1993.

Sir Russell Johnston: These are empty words when one considers the fact that there were 7,000 applications last year in rural Scotland under the homelessness legislation. Over the past eight years, the total figure has increased by 180 per cent., which is a shame on the Government. Do not the Government recognise that the simple way in which to deal with the problem is not to talk about more hostels and more bed-and-breakfast accommodation, but to give the local authorities money to build houses for reasonable rent? There is no other way in which to deal with the problem effectively.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that this afternoon we are making a £2·5 million supplementary allocation. Inverness district council will benefit by £100,000 owing to a shortfall of receipts. The hon. Gentleman must bear in mind the fact that over the past 10 years £10 million has been allocated through urban aid for homelessness projects. More than 1,200 housing association units have been grant aided over the past three years and some 450 homeless persons and families were provided with permanent accommodation by housing associations in 1991-92. Local authorities are expected to give priority to homelessness within their mainstream allocation.

Mr. Sykes: The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) used the phrase "empty words". Will my hon. Friend comment on the vast number of empty council houses in Labour-controlled councils throughout Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We want to bring empty houses back into use wherever they exist. Several study groups are looking into the matter and are considering not only local authority housing, but housing in the charge of Government Departments. We will take every possible measure to ensure that empty property is brought back into use.

Mr. Graham: Is the Minister aware that the extra money that was allocated to the homeless in Renfrew district will give us three houses? Is he aware that Scottish Homes has thousands of houses in Renfrew district and in Scotland generally? It is not playing a meaningful role in helping the district council to alleviate homelessness because it continues to sell houses that should be allocated to people who live in the local area.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Scottish Homes has taken action with local authorities on nomination agreements, which many local authorities have, and it has said that 7,000 units will be made available for waiting list applicants. I shall check on the position in Renfrew district. However, it has a good record overall and the many strategic agreements formed with local authorities take that factor into account.

Bank Charges

11. **Mr. Eric Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what meetings he has held with banks in Scotland about bank charges and the effect of changes in the charges on the viability of Scottish businesses, jobs and individuals with low fixed incomes.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I have frequent contacts with the Scottish banks which enable matters of this kind to be discussed as necessary. The levels of charges that the banks apply for particular services are, however, a matter for their commercial judgment.

Mr. Clarke: Is the Minister aware that thousands of people are suffering from high bank charges? I give him one example, that of Mrs. Margaret Reid who lives at Easthouses in my constituency. A miner's widow, she is being charged £3 by the Royal Bank of Scotland for every

transaction, for which she must pay out of her small pension. When she told the bank that she wanted to withdraw her account, she was told that she would be charged £10 to do that. Does he believe that people on such low incomes should be fleeced by the greedy banks?

Mr. Stewart: I cannot comment on the case which the hon. Gentleman raises. I am surprised that, as the lady's constituency hon. Member, he has not taken the opportunity to raise the matter with the Royal Bank. In general terms, I refer him to a recent survey by the Forum of Private Business, which concluded:

"In almost every aspect, the Scottish banks were perceived in a superior light to the English banks, including bank charges, interest rates, collateral, indices of quality and banking relationships."

I should have thought that, in the light of that, hon. Members might praise the Scottish financial community.

Knives

12. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received regarding Operation Blade carried out by Strathclyde police; and if he will make a statement.

19. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will introduce proposals to amend the law relating to sentences available to sheriffs for those convicted of carrying knives or other such instruments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received no representations concerning Operation Blade, but we strongly welcome the steps that have been taken by Strathclyde police to deal with the serious and growing problem of the carrying of knives. Operation Blade is an innovative strategy by the force and the first of its kind in Scotland. More than 4,500 weapons have already been surrendered. The Government will be supporting the Bill introduced yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) to strengthen the law on the carrying of knives in public.

Mr. Marshall: Will the Minister confirm that I have been raising with him the issue of crimes of violence for the past five years? Will he further confirm that last year I asked him to declare an amnesty and that he refused, on the basis that to do so, so soon after 1988, would debase its value? Is not it a fact that as Operation Blade has resulted in nearly 5,000 weapons being removed from the streets of Strathclyde, it is the Government who are debased? Why has it taken campaigns by the *Glasgow Evening Times* and the *Scottish Daily Record* to get the Government to act?

Is the Minister aware that horrific weapons of war are widely available in shops in our towns and cities? Will he now introduce legislation to ban the importation and sale of weapons such as the one I hold in my hand—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we proceed further, I must remind the hon. Gentleman that he is not allowed to bring such an implement into the Chamber, or indeed into the House.

Mr. Marshall: I apologise, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member has been here long enough to be aware of such matters. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that, at my request, he will remove it from the Chamber. I should be most grateful if he would.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Before we proceed, I am sure that the hon. Member will agree to do as I say.

Mr. Marshall: Yes, Madam Speaker. I will do that immediately.

Madam Speaker: Will he do it quickly, so that he can then hear the Minister's reply to his supplementary question?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I welcome the fact that Opposition Members are coming round to the Government's way of thinking on the need for a really strong law and order policy in this country. Only a short time ago they opposed the police having powers of search. The importance of the Bill is that it alters the onus of proof, which will make prosecutions easier. The existing provisions under the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 relate to the carrying of weapons and require the Crown to prove intent to injure. Under the Bill, it will not be necessary to prove that intent and that will take the policy much further forward. If the hon. Gentleman feels passionately about the issue, however, will he please make representations to Strathclyde regional council's Labour group and ask it to strengthen the police force, which is some 200 under strength at present?

Mr. Gallie: Will my hon. Friend accept my thanks for the time given by Scottish Office officials in preparing the Bill that will make the carrying of knives in public an offence? Will he welcome the support given by Opposition Members and does he agree that this is only one small step to redress an unacceptable position?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Yes, I can confirm that there is no stronger supporter of law and order in the House than my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr. I have no doubt that, with a general consensus of support for tightening the measures in relation to knives, we will strengthen law and order.

In 1992 there were 201 attempted murders in Strathclyde in which knives were used, compared with 126 the year before. The number of knife assaults has increased considerably. We have to take further measures and my hon. Friend's Bill will assist in that process.

Mr. McFall: In January we had the planted question; now we have the planted Bill. Despite enormous public concern in Scotland at the ever-increasing incidence of violence involving knives, the Minister of State only last week stated that the Government were unwilling to make parliamentary time available to fulfil the Conservative party's election manifesto commitment on knives. Eight days after that statement and one day after I presented my Bill to ban the carrying of knives, the hon. Member for Ayr was furnished by the Government with a Bill to do just that.

We accept, however, that the main issue is the carrying of knives in public places. Given the serious nature of the issue to the Scottish people, will the Minister agree to meet

me and a small number of my hon. Friends to discuss aspects of the Bill, thereby ensuring the swiftest progress in its passage through Parliament?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is yes, of course I will meet him. May I add that maximum penalties are now available. For example, if someone were to use a knife, he could be sentenced to life imprisonment on indictment. The Bill ensures that those who carry knives where no intent is proved can be proceeded against. That strengthens the powers of the police and also makes it easier to prosecute. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman supports the measure.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Before my hon. Friend jumps on the bandwagon of Mr. Boutros Boutros's Bill, may I remind the House what the law is? It is more than adequate. Under section 1 of the Prevention of Crime Act 1953, it is an offence punishable by two years' imprisonment—more than is sought in the Bill—to carry any offensive weapon in any public or private place, the proof of the carrier's intention, being neutral, being upon him. Furthermore, the Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1961 provides for the prevention of sale of offensive weapons. If the Government do not know what the law is, it is time that they did.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. and learned Friend is a brilliant man, but he is not always right. The Bill introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr changes the burden of proof by requiring the accused to demonstrate lawful authority or reasonable excuse for carrying the implement. That undoubtedly takes us further forward.

Economy and Employment

13. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss the economy and employment.

Mr. Lang: I have frequent meetings with the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss a range of economic, employment and training issues in Scotland.

Dr. Godman: Leaving aside for the moment the intense local speculation concerning Mimtec and Faulds Farm, Gourock, may I remind the Secretary of State that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), told me just 13 days ago that more than 48,000 people in Strathclyde, 2,000 of whom live in Inverclyde, have been unemployed for more than 12 months? Will the Secretary of State ensure that Scottish Enterprise involves itself in the sale of Scott Lithgow so that more employment may be provided in the area? Does he agree that if Scott Lithgow were brought into the enterprise zone it would be very attractive to a potential inward investor in shipbuilding or shiprepairing?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman must know that I cannot hold out any hope that it will be possible to change the boundaries of the enterprise zone. However, the very existence of the enterprise zone, together with the other benefits, schemes and initiatives that the Government and Scottish Enterprise bring to Inverclyde and other parts of Scotland, has helped to sustain the area's economy quite effectively during the period of recession. The hon. Gentleman mentioned unemployment. He should not overlook the brighter signs. Unemployment in his constituency, far from rising in the past year, has fallen. Although the level is still too high, it is more than 4,000 lower than it was six years ago.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, under the rules governing assisted area status and enterprise zones and the European Commission's rules, only 15 per cent. of the population of the United Kingdom may have assisted area status? In view of the great success of Scottish Enterprise in bringing jobs to Scotland, is not it now time for the assisted area status of some Scottish areas to be given up to other parts of the United Kingdom? It is clear that those parts of Scotland no longer need assistance.

Mr. Lang: As my hon. Friend knows, the assisted areas map is drawn on an even-handed basis across the United Kingdom, taking account of objective criteria that have been agreed. In this respect, Scotland is no different from Northern Ireland, Wales or England. However, the assisted areas map is under review. The issue is being carefully considered to ensure that we get the right structure and the right map for the future.

Mr. Donohoe: What progress has the Secretary of State made in pursuing companies that came to Irvine, were given massive grants and have now left without repaying any money to Scottish Enterprise? What progress has been made towards recovering this money?

Mr. Lang: Regional assistance is carefully controlled. Resources have to be repaid if the investment to which they relate is not undertaken within a certain time limit. That happens on rare occasions. If the hon. Gentleman knows of any cases in his constituency, I shall certainly follow them up and give him a detailed and specific reply.

Scottish Charities (Eastern Europe)

14. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the work of Scottish charities in eastern Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received no specific representations and while the Scottish Office has no responsibility for the work of Scottish charities in eastern Europe, he associates himself with the widespread appreciation of their efforts.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend congratulate Scottish European Aid—formerly Romania Project UK—on the excellence of its work at Ionaseni orphanage and Podriga hospital? Will he support Scottish European Aid's appeal for a mobile medical camp for Bosnia's stricken refugees?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I will consider my hon. Friend's request for assistance for the Edinburgh headquarters and I will write to him as soon as possible with regard to ways forward. On the question of training schemes, we should need detailed information, but we will consider the situation sympathetically. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his work, not only in founding the all-party campaign for inter-country adoption but for the orphanage in Ionaseni, Romania, and the psychiatric hospital at Podriga. I understand that rehabilitation of

buildings at Tuzla, too, is proceeding. We warmly welcome the work of Scottish European Aid and wish it every success.

Stobhill Hospital

15. **Mr. Michael J. Martin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has yet received the health board's recommendations regarding the future of Stobhill hospital.

Mr. Stewart: The Greater Glasgow health board has yet to conclude its review of acute and maternity services. Stobhill hospital features as part of that review. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State looks forward to receiving the health board's recommendations in due course.

Mr. Martin: Will the Minister tell the health board and its new chairman that Stobhill is an excellent facility at the north end of the city? It serves not only my constituency but many other constituencies in Glagow—and, indeed, Strathkelvin and further afield as far as Kilsyth and Torrance. To lose the facility will mean a lot of harm to the health of many thousands of people. I hope that the Minister will take on board the fact that we have a first-class team in Stobhill from the doctors down to the domestics. I hope that the hospital has a good future.

Mr. Stewart: I appreciate what the hon. Gentleman says. The review to which I referred is about putting patients first and providing patients with important services. I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that, once the recommendations of the board are with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or the Minister of State, they will be happy to meet him to discuss the matter in detail.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I am seeking your ruling on the procedure used by Health Ministers yesterday to announce a record increase in prescription charges without an oral statement on which they could be questioned. The written details purported to be "pursuant to" a written answer to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett) on 16 February, although the original question did not mention prescription charge rates or prescription charge increases, and it was answered in full.

That practice was condemned by the Select Committee on Procedure in its third report, Session 1990-91, paragraph 129, in which it said:

"It is hard to see how a matter can be of such urgency that an announcement must be made without prior notice on a particular day, and yet not be of sufficient importance to justify an oral statement to the House."

Would you agree, Madam Speaker, that such practice is "inherently undesirable and an abuse of the procedures of this House"?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker, I am a Member of the Procedure Committee, and I am pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has taken the opportunity to emphasise from the Front Bench the points which the Committee made.

You, like your predecessors, have rightly deprecated the custom whereby journalists—indeed, the world at large—are given information by the Government before the House. This is an important announcement, which undoubtedly penalises the sick in our society. It is controversial. What possible justification can there be to give the announcement to the Lobby and the rest of the country and not make an oral statement in the House on which the Secretary of State for Health can be questioned while you are presiding?

If it is too late now, would you make it clear that such statements should be made to the House in future? We should be given the first opportunity; otherwise, the remarks which you and your predecessors made are simply made a mockery of by Ministers——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I can deal with the point of order.

The written answer given yesterday, which is in columns *95* and *96* of *Hansard*, is concerned almost entirely with the proposed level of prescription charges for the year 1993-94, and is described as "pursuant to" an answer of 15 February to the hon. Member for Erith and Crayford (Mr. Evennett), which is at column *162*.

I have noted that the Select Committee on Procedure, in its third report of Session 1990-91, stated its belief that "the use by Ministers of 'pursuant' answers is inherently undesirable".

The report goes on to say:

"The offence is compounded when . . . an answer is given which claims to be 'pursuant' to an earlier reply but which in fact has only the most tenuous link with it."

As we well know, the House has not yet had the opportunity to debate the Procedure Committee's recommendations on how the practice should be dealt with. But I wish to make it clear that I deprecate the use of the "pursuant" device by Ministers to make written statements such as this without giving proper notice to the House. I hope that that clears up the points of order, and that we can now get on with our business.

Mrs. Ewing, on a separate point of order.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On a separate point of order arising out of Scottish questions, Madam Speaker. You will know that considerable interest in civil legal aid was expressed during questions. On at least two occasions, the Secretary of State for Scotland said that he believed that the cost of civil legal aid in Scotland had doubled in the past five years. That is in direct contradiction of written answers which were provided to me on 12 February.

It is important that such inaccuracies should not be written into our records. Is there something that you can do to ensure that, within the Scottish Office, answers communicated by junior Ministers are relayed to the Secretary of State so that information is accurately recorded in all our records?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Lady is wily enough and has sufficient imagination to put her point across. It is a matter of policy, not one for me.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): Further to the point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There can be no further points of order on that matter. I have dealt with it.

Mr. Griffiths: On a different point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is it a separate point of order?

Mr. Griffiths: Yes.

Madam Speaker: I will hear it, provided that it is a separate point of order.

Mr. Griffiths: On the procedures of the House, I fully accept your ruling on the previous point of order——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have dealt with that. There can be no further point of order on that matter. I have dealt with it adequately. We must now move on.

Mr. Griffiths *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman challenging that ruling? He told me that it was a separate point of order before he got to his feet. I accepted his word as an hon. Gentleman. Is it a separate point of order now?

Mr. Griffiths: The Procedure Committee two years ago made a recommendation which the House has not yet had chance to debate. Is it not an indictment of the Government's handling of business that it takes two years for such matters to come before the House? Is that not a way for Ministers to gag the House of Commons on embarrassing statements such as the one on prescription charges?

Madam Speaker: I have no doubt that what I said earlier will have been noted. Now perhaps we can——

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. It seems that Members in the last moment or two have ideas in their mind which they

can raise as a point of order. Some of them are bogus points of order. I have no intention of letting the House be delayed by bogus points of order. I shall now proceed.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Well, I must hear a bit of it to start with.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker. May I remind you that, on 26 January, I raised with you in a point of order the advisability of documents which are the basis of ministerial statements being placed in the Vote Office for Members some 30 minutes before the statement is due to be made? You advised me to raise it with the Leader of the House, which I did on 27 January. I have heard no more. Has the Leader of the House been in touch with you on this legitimate point of order?

Madam Speaker: It is within my recollection, but it has nothing to do with me.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would it be in order for the Opposition to use an Opposition day debate to discuss prescription charges so that Conservative Members can point out that a Labour Government first proposed prescription charges——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must get on with the 10-minute rule motion.

Coal Industry (Abolition of Statutory Manpower Limits)

3.39 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend section 36(2)(a) of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946; and for connected purposes.

The present furore in the coal industry and in the country, following British Coal's and the Government's October announcement of their intention to close 31 pits, has brought into focus many aspects of the coal and energy market, which are the subject of on-going reports and debate.

The future of those 31 pits remains in the balance, with 21 working and 10 closed but subject to a review procedure. My view of the way in which the announcement was made in October is well known, and I do not intend to go over that ground again today. All I shall say is that I look to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to produce a balanced energy programme which will allow a substantial number of those pits to remain open under British Coal management.

I continue to press that view, on the basis that we must save not only the jobs of the majority of the 30,000 miners involved, but also the livelihoods of the estimated 50,000 additional people employed in associated industries or small local businesses, and those involved in this country's wider manufacturing base.

For some mines, there is an alternative to remaining under British Coal management: they could be leased or sold for private licensed operation. I have positive information that a consortium could be interested in operating Markham Main colliery in Yorkshire, and that the well-known mining company, Ryan, would be interested in operating Betws colliery in Wales; and I am sure that there could well be others.

The chairman of British Coal has publicly said that he would not be opposed to pits within the 10 under review being transferred to licensed status and operated privately. I and others intend to keep him to that offer, to maximise the number of mining jobs retained and to enable the removal of the so-called easily mined coal from these pits. That is where the problem arises—hence the need for my Bill.

Present legislation limits to 150 the number of workers employed underground in licensed mines at any one time. For many mines to operate efficiently and safely—I stress the word safely—that number is inadequate. Without becoming involved in a discussion about the number of men needed to run a privately operated mine compared with the existing number, a limit of 150 underground workers at any time in a licensed mine is too restrictive.

There is a stronger case than ever for removing the restriction. If it remains in place, the pits that British Coal plans to close will have no future, because virtually all of them employ many more miners than the licensing limit. Some of the pits that British Coal may not want to work remain viable, with good short-term coal reserves and good industrial relations. They could operate profitably. I cite as an example Grimethorpe colliery in South Yorkshire, which the international mining consultants Boyd have recently shown to be viable.

[Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock]

If the restriction is removed, there is a chance that at least some of the pits, and therefore some of the miners, could find a future in the private sector. I am sure that the House is well aware that the Coal Act 1938 and the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946 provide the basic legal framework for the coal industry. The 1938 Act removed the freehold ownership of coal from the private sector and vested it in the Coal Commission. The 1946 Act created the National Coal Board, which acquired all the interests of the Coal Commission and was given the exclusive duty of working and searching for coal.

Section 36(2) of the 1946 Act, however, empowered the NCB to license coal mining or, as an ancillary, the mining of other materials. Until 1990, the size of licensed deep mines was severely curtailed by the statutory manpower limit of 30 men employed to work underground. The Government went some way towards liberalising the regime for the licensed sector by section 4 of the Coal Industry Act 1990, which increased the limit to 150 men.

The scope of my Bill is totally to remove the restriction, by amending section 36(2)(a) of the Coal Industry Nationalisation Act 1946. I hope that the House will support me in my endeavour. I am convinced that there is no shortage of individuals and companies interested in creating a future for some of the pits. There is certainly no shortage of energy and commitment among the people at the pits, who believe that there is potential there. Some of them may prove to be over-optimistic.

There should be no pretence that the amending legislation would save as many jobs as some of us would like. However, the new operators would want to run the pits as efficiently as possible—as I am sure British Coal do—which might mean fewer jobs. There should be no illusions that the measure would be a cure-all for the coal industry. At least the operators would provide the opportunity—a second chance—for the operations to succeed and for some jobs to be saved. It would be wrong to allow an anomalous restriction to prevent that second chance.

On behalf of miners, their families and the wider energy needs of the country I ask the House for leave to bring in the amendment to the outdated and unnecessary legislation.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I wish to oppose.

3.46 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): I was first.

I wish to oppose the Bill, as I want to place on record the fact that the Opposition do not want to go back to the era of privatisation in the coal mines. The hon. Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) wants to increase the numbers that are allowed to work in a private mine. Just before the last election, legislation was passed which increased the numbers from 30 to 150, and every Labour Member voted against that proposal. I hope that they will do the same again today. If we as a Labour party were against increasing the number of people working in a pit from 30 to 150 it should follow that we are against any further increase.

The reason that we are against the privatisation of mines is fairly simple. The Mines and Quarries Acts, which form the backbone of the legislation on the supervision and extraction of coal, have been etched in blood—miners' blood. Over the years—in fact, decades—several disasters have taken place. Following each disaster, well-meaning people have told the House of Commons that we needed another regulation to ensure that such a disaster never happened again.

That is how many of the Mines and Quarries Acts have been built up over the years. They have grown up as a result of 80 miners losing their lives in one place and another 200 losing their lives somewhere else. The Opposition are not prepared to cast away provisions that exist to ensure the limited safety of miners when they are engaged underground and at the pit top.

None of us would claim for one minute that it is totally safe in a pit—of course it is not. But we must preserve the Mines and Quarries Acts, and the present health and safety provisions. We all know that the main reason for the coal industry being nationalised was that, at the end of, and during, the war, privatisation was seen to be failing the nation, as it would again.

We cannot provide the necessary energy through coal on the basis of private enterprise. During the run-up to the second world war and beyond, the Government had to intervene. Many of the Tories who were then involved were private coal owners, and they collaborated over the idea of public ownership.

The Opposition would be the first to admit that public ownership has not been the bees' knees in the mining industry. But why? Not because of the philosophy of public ownership, but because of the Tory people running it. There is one running it now who is called Neil Clarke. His salary increased from £98,000 to more than £200,000 when he took the job. Why did this rotten Government increase his salary? Because they knew that he would be a patsy for privatisation and running down the pits.

It is interesting that both the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and Neil Clarke went on television on 13 October and said the same things. They talked about having a tiny industry. Why, one might ask, would British Coal want a small coal mining industry? Simple—because Neil Clarke and his acolytes at Hobart house wanted to run the privatised industry, and they did not want competition. They did not want 30, 40 or 50 pits; they wanted a small number of the most productive pits so that they could make a big fat profit running the industry. That is why we are opposed to this Bill.

If the hon. Lady or any other Tory Members who have spouted about supporting the miners in the past want to support the Opposition—they have been good talkers, but they have been no good in the ring, with the exception of the hon. Lady and, I think, two others on the day in question—to save the 31 pits, they will not do it by back-door privatisation. They must have the guts to tell the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that they support the millions of people out there in the country who believe that the mines should stay open.

If the Government really believe in cutting unemployment, they have an opportunity to save 100,000 jobs in the course of the next few weeks—the 30,000 miners' jobs that would be lost and the 70,000 others. If they do not do that, those Ministers, including the Minister for Energy, who are smirking away on the Front Bench, will be adding to that enormous unemployment total in Britain which is now more than 4 million in real terms.

What will that unemployment cost? It is already costing £30 billion to finance that pile of human misery known as

the dole queue. It is economic madness. We should not be adding to it, and nor should the Government. Anyone who wants to help the coal industry should be calling for a cut in imports—20 million tonnes this year coming from slave labour economies, some of it much dearer than the coal that is mined in Britain.

Bolsover pit in my constituency was producing coal the other week at 67p per gigajoule, yet the Government talk about pits not being competitive. Now that the pound has been devalued by between 15 and 20 per cent., we should not be importing coal but exporting it to every country in the world.

If the Government want to save some more pits, they can cut down on opencast mining, which produced 18·5 million tonnes last year. We can do without it. Let us reduce it to the level it was when the Labour Government left office. Let us reduce the imports to the 5 million tonnes when the Labour Government left office. If we did that, we would save another 12 or 13 pits. Let us close the Magnox nuclear stations and save six more pits. Let us cut the French nuclear link and save another half a dozen pits.

If the Government or any Tory Member had the will or the guts to save the pits, it would be relatively easy to do so. The result would be that, instead of spending £900 million to finance 100,000 people out of work, with a subsidy only half that which Nuclear Power gets for 22 per cent. of the energy market, we would be saving the British taxpayer several hundred million pounds. It would not be a subsidy; it would be a saving. Those who want to help us to save the pits have plenty of opportunities to do so.

I finish on this note. My hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) knows a little bit about private mines, because the north-east has one or two. He told me about one incident fairly recently when the haulage rope in a private mine snapped. Because the mine was trying to save money, a knot was tied in the rope. That would not be allowed under the Mines and Quarries Act 1954.

How will private mines cope with pumping out water from the adjoining collieries that have been closed? Have the Government ever stopped to think about that? If Silverhill colliery were sold to a group of entrepreneurs, they would have to pay £250,000 for every pump to pump the water out of another pit five miles up the road. Would they do it? Of course they would not. They would go running to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry asking for a subsidy to pump out the water from somebody else's pit. How will they pump out the methane from an adjoining colliery? That would have to be done. It sounds all right to have a little private mine, but mines are not little and they are not private, if you want to compete in the energy market. The environmental problems of the water and methane would have to be dealt with. The whole thing is a load of nonsense. That is why those who took part in a private mine in Scotland are, despite their sterling efforts, realising that they are having to carry the costs that belong to somebody else. So do not let us talk nonsense.

The mines have always been a case of battling against mother nature. It is not like working in a factory. The strong mines help the weak, and sometimes the strong mines become weak and the weak mines become strong as they find a better coal seam. Let us have some common sense.

People think that they can come up with tinpot answers and solve the problem. The problem is staring the Government in the face. Save the 31 pits, and if we start exporting coal, the balance of payments problem will be solved——

Madam Speaker: Order. Time's up.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House divided: Ayes 55, Noes 180.

Division No. 167] **[3.55 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dunn, Bob
Dykes, Hugh
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fry, Peter
Gallie, Phil
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Harris, David
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Kilfedder, Sir James
Lidington, David
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sweeney, Walter
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waterson, Nigel
Whittingdale, John
Willetts, David

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Cran and
Mrs. Angela Knight.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John

Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Harvey, Nick
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Salmond, Alex
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Michael Clapham.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Education Bill

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Madam Speaker: We shall now proceed to consider amendments up to the end of schedule 12, and the Government motion relating to clause 214.

Clause 197

APPOINTMENT OF ADDITIONAL GOVERNORS

4.6 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I beg to move amendment No. 16, in page 119, line 17 leave out 'controlled' and insert 'voluntary'.

Madam Speaker: I understand that with this it will be convenient to take also the following amendments: No. 17, in page 119, line 18 after 'may', insert—

'(a) forthwith and without any obligation to consider representations made by or on behalf of any person affected, remove from office any person who is a governor appointed by them or a co-opted governor, and

(b)'.

No. 18, in page 119, line 19 at end insert

'whether by way of replacement of persons removed from office under paragraph (a) above or as additional governors'.

No. 19, in page 119, line 20 after 'appointment', insert 'of additional governors'.

No. 20, in page 119, line 32 at end insert—

'(3) Subsection (1) above is without prejudice to section 8(5) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986 (general power of removal of governors by those who appoint them).

(4) The local education authority shall not exercise the power conferred by subsection (1)(a) in relation to a voluntary school unless they have consulted the person who appoints the school's foundation governors.

(5) In this section "co-opted governor" has the same meaning as in the Education (No. 2) Act 1986.'.

Mr. Griffiths: This group of five amendments to clause 197, which deals with the appointment of additional governors, aims to increase the local education authority's powers over schools which are considered to be at risk or over any voluntary school considered to be in the same position. The amendments provide an alternative—perhaps one could even argue that they complement what the Secretary of State is choosing to do in transferring a school considered to be at risk to an education association.

It is the Government's intention in clauses 197 and 198 to provide the LEA with a set of additional powers to try to turn around a failing school. However, the powers contained in those two clauses are insufficient, and our amendments would reinforce the powers already provided to local education authorities in the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. They also propose a new power intended to be more closely equivalent to the powers that the Secretary of State has taken to himself in clause 58 over the governing body of an at-risk grant-maintained school. We seek parity of power and esteem for a local education authority to act in

respect of a maintained school or a voluntary school in the same way as the Secretary of State would act in respect of an at-risk grant-maintained school.

Let us look at some of the detail of the amendments. Amendment No. 17, the first of the main elements of the group, provides for an unrestricted power summarily to remove any local authority appointed governor or co-opted governor, which would effectively enable a majority of the governing body to be replaced. As I have said, that is equivalent to the Secretary of State's power under clause 58 to replace the first governors in a grant-maintained school which is a former county school.

The amendment would provide a power to remove co-opted governors, which is an innovation, proposed mainly in order to provide a power to remove and replace a majority of the governing body of a county school without affecting parent governors or teacher governors. In the case of voluntary schools, local education authority appointees and co-opted governors do not constitute a majority, but the person who appoints foundation governors already has a power, albeit a restricted power, to remove them.

Thus, the powers in clause 197, even with the amendments, would require the person with that power over the foundation governors to be involved in order to replace a majority of the governing body. The local education authority's existing power to remove LEA appointed governors, and the equivalent powers held by others to remove foundation governors, come from section 8(5) of the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. There have been legal challenges to that power, as in the case of Brunyate *v.* ILEA in 1989. Thus, the intention of amendment 17 is to make local education authorities' powers in the case of an at-risk school entirely unambiguous, and to extend them to cover co-opted governors under the same terms.

Amendment No. 16 may be contentious in that it proposes to widen the scope of clause 197 to include voluntary-aided schools as well as voluntary-controlled schools. Nevertheless, that is not intended to shift the main weight of responsibility for removing governors, which lies with the person who appoints the foundation governors. In the exceptional circumstances—I repeat and emphasise the phrase "exceptional circumstances"—in which a voluntary-aided school may find itself at risk, and for as long as it remains at risk, the amended clause would permit the local authority to appoint extra governors so that the foundation governors would not comprise a majority.

The new subsection (4) of clause 197, suggested in amendment No. 20, would require that the local education authority's powers over the governing body of a voluntary school be used only after consultation with the person who appointed the foundation governors. In other words, unlike the clause as currently drafted, the clause as amended would provide for such consultation in the case of voluntary-controlled schools. As the clause stands the Government seem to have no intention of allowing such consultation.

The second element in the group of amendments is to be found in amendment No. 18, which would completely change the thrust of clause 197 from being concerned exclusively with additional governors to a balanced approach of replacement or additional governors. The thrust of our amendments is to give local education authorities exactly the same opportunities and powers in respect of maintained and voluntary schools as the Secretary of State has or will have over grant-maintained schools which are former county schools and which may become at risk. We hope that the Government will accept that it is preferable to give the local education authority extra power similar to that of the Secretary of State to turn round a school which is at risk.

Even under existing powers, local education authorities occasionally intervene effectively to turn around failing schools. I can cite one school, which I shall not name, to show how a local education authority can work effectively. A couple of years ago, the school was between one third and half full. The local education authority determined that it would have to take action, and within two years that same school is now over-subscribed. Local education authorities can do that job.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I am following the hon. Gentleman's argument closely, and I very much applaud what he had to say about the LEA that turned the school around, but I expect that he would be the first to agree that, sadly, not all LEAs can do that. Failing schools exist despite the best endeavours of local education authorities. That is where my right hon. Friend's admirable initiative comes in. The education association is a long stop, but it sorts out that problem. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in welcoming my right hon. Friend's views on the matter.

Mr. Griffiths: I shall turn to that in a moment. Let me point out to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), who I know has a long-standing interest in education—although it is sometimes misguided—that our amendments seek to strengthen the powers of a local education authority to deal with an at-risk school and to place those powers on a par with the powers of the Secretary of State in respect of grant-maintained schools which might become at risk. We know that that has happened, and that there were tremendous difficulties in dealing with that problem.

One reason why LEAs often encounter difficulties, whether or not they are entirely justified, is the question whether they have untrammelled powers to take action against a school that is at risk. Our amendments, by giving LEAs the same powers as the Secretary of State, will make it abundantly clear that they should take action. If they fail to act, the Secretary of State's own powers to create an education authority will come into play.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): I applaud the heart of the hon. Gentleman, but is his head working too? He said that the school was one third to half full. Does he accept that there are 900,000 surplus school places in Britain, including 19,000 surplus secondary school places in Lancashire? The money that is spent on those surplus places should be funding other schools, and in Lancashire providing more places at the overcrowded Lancashire primary schools. The hon. Gentleman is moving the pieces round the chess board. We want to get rid of surplus places.

Mr. Griffiths: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention, although it is at a tangent to my argument. Surplus places cannot be discussed under the issue of failing schools, unless the hon. Lady is suggesting that, as soon as a school is seen to be failing, it should be closed completely rather than being given a second chance.

The Secretary of State for Education (Mr. John Patten): I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that there is only one chance for any child in his or her school career; there is no second chance. Does he agree that, in the case of a school such as the one to which he has referred—which he properly has not named—if the local education authority does not move swiftly and effectively, the next thing to happen, once the Bill is enacted, will be for the education association to become effective? If the education association does not move in, the school will wither on the vine, and with that withering process may come the ruin of the careers of the declining number of children in the school.

Mr. Griffiths: The whole point of the amendment is to give the local education authority the power to move in unambiguously, as the Secretary of State hopes that the education association will do.

Our hope is that, if the Government give a favourable wind to our amendments, the powers of the LEA to act to stop schools failing will be on a par with the Secretary of State's powers. At present, LEAs do not have the same powers. I do not pretend to be an expert on how local education authorities work vis-a-vis all schools that are at risk. There was a fear that LEAs might not have sufficient powers to carry out a full-scale exercise if the head of a school at risk put up a fight. One can hardly imagine that a head would do that, but it seems that they have in the past.

I do not seek to give an LEA any powers that the Secretary of State will not exercise. I hope that, by giving new powers to the LEA, which are on a par with his own, we will help it to move into schools at risk at the earliest stage, instead of wondering how effectively it can act. The amendment would obviate the need for the education association to move in in such cases.

There is no guarantee that the education association will be successful. By definition, it could involve men and women who have been retired from education for some time and who may not be fully conversant with all the problems in a local authority area. For all the good will that the Secretary of State sees behind the concept, the education association may not be the best body to act. Local education authorities, equipped with the powers proposed in the amendment, will be able to move effectively against falling schools.

Mr. Pawsey: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the principal virtues of the education association is that it will be new, independent and unbiased? It will not be touched by association with the LEA. There may be a dispute, an argument or a background problem, but the education association will come into the school absolutely impartially. The LEA may not be seen as impartial, and that may hold it back.

Mr. Griffiths: We are moving on to new ground with the education associations, so there is nothing against which we can test the hon. Gentleman's argument. It must be supposition and hope at this stage, as there is no evidence on which he can base a valid argument. We do not know how the Secretary of State will act in appointing education associations. An association might turn out to be a good friend of the head of a school at risk and might, because of that, feel a constraint. We can only speculate about what an association might do.

On the other hand, a local education authority with a determination to deal with a failing school, particularly with the powers that we propose it should have—powers which are no greater than those possessed by the Secretary of State in respect of a grant-maintained school at risk —would be able to act effectively. If for some reason, in a minority of cases, it turned out not to be effective, that would become apparent quickly and the education association might then have a chance to act.

Many people perceive the education associations as a rather confrontational group of educational SAS people parachuted into a situation about which they might know little, and the result could be much heartache and no success. On the other hand, if the LEA were given the powers that we propose, it would be able to act effectively. The backstop position of the education association would remain in the unlikely event of the LEA not having done its job properly.

On the basis that we would not be giving the LEA more power to deal with maintained or voluntary schools than the Secretary of State has to deal with grant-maintained schools, we trust that the Government will accept the amendment.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): This group of Opposition amendments raises important issues about educational standards in schools and in particular about who carries responsibility for improving standards and how those responsibilities shall be implemented. We are concerned with part V of the Bill, which sits uncomfortably on the Education Act 1988 and the Education Act 1992 because it fails to establish a clear framework of what should be done, who should be doing it and how it should be carried out.

The 1988 Act delegated more responsibility to school governors and the 1992 Act provided for schools to be regularly inspected using nationally defined criteria, with the governing body carrying the responsibility to act on the findings of those inspections. Sadly, the clause that we are discussing concentrates on only that small proportion of schools which, when inspected, are found to be at risk.

Such schools undoubtedly need help, but I suspect that it may be too late for many of them. In a recent intervention, the Secretary of State referred to the way in which education associations might be able to provide assistance to schools. But schools which have been defined as being at risk may be beyond hope of redemption. So we should also be examining what support can be offered to the governing bodies of schools at an earlier stage, rather than concentrating on the crude interventionist procedures in the Bill. More work should be done with governing bodies in a constructive way long before schools are defined as failing schools.

4.30 pm

It is a great pity, therefore, that in our debate yesterday constraints of time prevented us from discussing some of the new clauses and amendments that had been tabled. For example, my new clause 15 and amendment No. 29, which Madam Speaker had been kind enough to select, would have extended the requirements for governors' annual reports to give clearer information to parents and other interested observers about what the school had achieved each year within the framework of the national inspection criteria. New clause 17 and amendment No. 32 would have ensured that the annual appraisal of the performance of

the school's headteacher was properly independent and objective. My amendments Nos. 30 and 31 would have placed much greater emphasis on a governing body's financial planning. A much broader approach to quality assurance is needed in our schools, reinforcing the leading decision-making role played by school governors.

Clause 197 and the amendments rightly address the question of governing bodies—even though, as I suggested, the remedy would come rather late in the day and only in extreme circumstances. In such circumstances, the question must be whether the local education authority has sufficient powers to turn round the school governing body's problems. Without amendments No. 16 to 20, the answer must undoubtedly be no.

The Government themselves have shown that to be the case. Their proposed remedy in clause 58 for grant-maintained schools in similarly extreme circumstances gives much greater power—the power to replace the majority of the governing body. Yet clause 197, dealing with local education authority schools, only offers the local education authority the power to acquire a majority by adding more and more governors to the governing body, increasing the size of the governing body almost without limit. Clearly, that is not a sensible approach. The amendments provide a sensible approach and I hope that they will be accepted.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): The amendments would give more power to local education authorities to deal with failing schools. I shall concentrate on the only alternative provided by the Government—that of establishing education associations—which manifestly fails to solve the problem in hand. The amendments would obviate the need for education associations by giving local education authorities more powers to act.

No reasonable hon. Member would impede any measure that addressed the problem of schools that are failing their pupils—whether LEA-maintained, grant-maintained, independent or private schools or city technology colleges. I am led to wonder why the provisions for the establishment of education associations—which we seek to remove from the Bill—deal only with LEA-maintained schools. If the Government were genuine in their alleged concern for pupils in failing schools, they would have introduced measures which dealt with problems in all schools.

We have not tackled the question of how big the problem is, and it needs to be quantified. On Second Reading and since, the Secretary of State has referred to his "little list", which we are led to believe consists of just over 100 schools.

Mr. Patten: On a matter of information, the list to which I referred is not in my hands but in the hands of the inspector, who is entirely independent. I have seen no such list. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that it is Her Majesty's chief inspector who will make representations to me about schools that he regards as failing, and I repeat that he is totally independent.

Mr. Jamieson: I am grateful for the Secretary of State's clarification. The right hon. Gentleman will recall that in his evidence to the Select Committee he referred to the report of the chief inspector which indicates that about 200 schools are at risk. The Secretary of State has referred several times to the existence of a little list. On 28 October he admitted to the Select Committee that the proportion of the 23,000 to 24,000 schools was not large. I am glad to say that, for once, I agree with him. In fact, the figure is between 0·5 and 1 per cent. May I assume, therefore, that the Secretary of State will congratulate the LEAs on their conduct of the 99 per cent. of schools that are clearly being run well? If a similar survey throughout Brtitish industry could reveal a success rate of 99 per cent. and a failure rate of only 1 per cent. the official receivers would be far less overworked.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to draw attention to the fact that the majority of schools are functioning well. However, a very small number are not functioning so well as he and I would like. Surely the object of the education association is to come in as a long-stop and sort out those that are failing.

Mr. Jamieson: I wish that the hon. Gentleman's assertion were correct. My point is that LEAs have been very successful in dealing with schools that have problems. That was indicated in the Secretary of State's evidence to the Select Committee. The right hon. Gentleman said that 99 per cent. of schools were functioning extremely well. The amendments with which we are dealing would give local education authorities more power to deal with the remaining 0·5 to 1 per cent. Our assertion is that the LEAs are best placed to do for those schools what they have done for the other 99 per cent., and we want the authorities to have the necessary power.

Mr. Pawsey: I suspect that there is very little difference between the hon. Gentleman and myself. I acknowledge the point that he makes, and he is right to make it. All I am saying is that the LEA will already have had a good crack at turning a failing school round. In such circumstances, authorities try very hard. Unfortunately, in a very small number of cases they are not successful. It is in respect of the 0·5 to 1 per cent. of schools that the education association will come in. This will happen right at the end of the line—after everything else has been tried. As I have said, there is little difference between the hon. Gentleman and myself.

Mr. Jamieson: If there is so little difference between us, why does the hon. Gentleman keep bobbing up and down? If he will stay in his place and contain his excitement for a few moments, I will say why I believe that the Government's alternative is utterly disastrous and why our amendment would be far more efficacious. There is one matter in respect of which there may be less agreement between the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth and myself: I wonder whether the creation of education associations has more to do with the establishment of grant-maintained schools by the back door than with genuine concern about schools that are failing.

Mr. Pawsey: Will the hon. Gentleman give way again?

Mr. Jamieson: As an act of supreme generosity, I will give way to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). Unlike the Secretary of State, I know the hon. Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Pawsey: I have achieved a hat trick of interventions in the hon. Gentleman's speech.

There is no need to talk about the introduction of grant-maintained schools by the back door. Grant-maintained schools will be established because parents want them. The hon. Gentleman is well aware that literally

[Mr. Pawsey]

hundreds of grant-maintained schools have so far emerged. By 1996, or thereabouts, there will be thousands of such schools. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I am obliged to my hon. Friends for their support. There is no need for us to try the back-door approach because, frankly, schools will be flooding in through the front door that we have opened.

Mr. Jamieson: We have not been surprised by any avalanche of schools going grant-maintained recently. The Bill is before us because of the Government's supreme disappointment that more schools have not gone grant-maintained in the past four years. I shall deal with the points made by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth in a moment.

We need to contrast the power which the local education authority could have under our amendments and what the Government are proposing. The proposed education associations would be a sort of flying squad of four or five members going into a school to sort it out. The powers given to the education associations deserve some examination.

During the Committee on the Bill, it became clear that a third sort of school will be created when an education association is sent in. This may help the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth because I shall contrast my point to that which he made. If an education association is sent in to a school, the school will no longer be a local education authority school, nor will it be grant-maintained. The school will lie somewhere between the two.

During the Committee, the Minister—unlike the Secretary of State who was unable to attend any of the sessions of the Committee—said that the school will be in a state of limbo. The Minister was clear about this in Committee and I quote:

"If an education association has been established for a school, ipso facto that school ceases to be maintained by the LEA . . . Schools under an education association are not grant-maintained schools"—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E;* 2 February 1993, c. 1247-48.]

At a stroke, a new school had been created which was neither local education authority nor grant maintained. The Minister also told the Committee that the education association would employ the people in schools.

As the debate went on, it became clear that funding for the education association for a school would come through the funding agency. Once the education association has done its work, what are the alternatives? The alternatives in the Bill are clear: first, the school should cease to exist—it should close. Secondly, it should become grant-maintained. There is no suggestion in the Bill that the school then goes back to the local education authority and that it should be controlled by the authority.

The Bill does not tell us whether there will be a ballot of parents to send the school grant-maintained after the education association has done its work. Will parents have a role in deciding that their children's school will become grant-maintained after an education association has been in? There is no provision in the Bill to do that.

In the White Paper, the Government said that the only significant extra funding provided in the Bill would be additional expenditure for the establishment and operation of the funding agency. We were disappointed because we felt that there were many areas of concern in the education system which could have done with extra funding.

In Committee, it was revealed that funding will be required for the operation of education associations. In the first instance, the charge for administering the education associations will fall on school budgets. A failing school which may already be underfunded therefore will have a further burden of cloying bureaucracy in the shape of the education association put on it. We were told that the education association could call in specialised advice and set up committees.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am listening with great interest to what the hon. Gentleman is saying. I do not necessarily criticise this, but he seems to be straying widely from the original amendment.

Mr. Win Griffiths: It is the other side of the argument.

4.45 pm

Mr. Thompson: I said that I found the hon. Gentleman's remarks interesting. There are considerable powers for local education authorities to find ways in which to improve schools which are likely to come into the category of failing schools. Will the hon. Gentleman comment on that? Bearing in mind that he is talking at some length about the whole concept of education associations, I fail to understand why Opposition Members have continually sought to wreck the Bill by removing the whole idea of a new initiative to improve and help children in failing schools. Can the hon. Gentleman explain that to the House?

Mr. Jamieson: I am sure that hon. Members have noted the bid by the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) to take over the job of the Chair by keeping this debate in order. If he does so again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am sure that you will put him right.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I will correct any hon. Member who veers outside the provinces of the debate, but so far no one has done that.

Mr. Jamieson: It was certainly not my intention to suggest that you had not kept any hon. Member in order. I was simply a little surprised that the hon. Member for Norwich, North appeared to be trying to do the job on your behalf.

My point is that our amendments suggest methods by which local education authorities could be more successful in tackling failing schools. I am contrasting that with the proposal in the Bill for education associations to tackle failing schools. I think that the proposal in the Bill will manifestly fail because it sets in place a further level of bureaucracy to be imposed on schools. The costs of that bureaucracy will also be placed on schools.

We were told that education associations could call in specialist advice and set up committees. What will be the cost of that new bureaucracy? Who will pay for that additional paper-shuffling? Will education associations pay fat fees to advisers? I should like an answer.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Jamieson: A number of hon. Members seem to want to intervene. I give way to the hon. Member for Croydon North-East (Mr. Congdon).

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman is going on about the cost. I thought that the cost would be a small price to pay in those extreme cases where a school is failing and the education of the children is suffering thereby. We are talking about those extreme cases in which the local education authority has tried various measures and failed. I thought that the price was a small one to pay to improve the education for those children. They do not get a second opportunity.

Mr. Jamieson: Certainly, children do not get a second opportunity. I should add that such schools are those to which a majority of Labour Members send their children.

In the White Paper, the Government said that the only significant funding would be for the funding agency. What I am saying today is that the Government are also proposing that moneys will be spent on the education associations. The question of who the members of the education associations will be also bears examination.

I am sure that the Secretary of State would agree that the *Financial Times* is well known for its accurate reporting. On 29 July, the Secretary of State is reported to have said:

"The education associations will be composed of retired teachers and people 'good at running things'."

Later we heard that retired head teachers and business men were likely to be enlisted. I know several retired head teachers and teachers and the last thing that they would want to do is to undertake work on a voluntary basis running failing schools. Will the appointees be vetted? Yesterday we heard the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) ring alarm bells about retired head teachers. He was worried that they might not be politically correct.

I am afraid that the education association would be yet another layer of expensive bureaucracy packed with Tory placemen on fat expense accounts paid for by children's books. They will not begin to resemble the excellent teams of advisers and inspectors which LEAs were previously able to maintain. Instead, we shall have a rather elderly Dad's Army of Tory appointees, accountable to no one except the Secretary of State.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): In the limited time left to me, I shall attempt to summarise the main points that have come out of the debate. Two points seem clear to me, although the Opposition have hardly told us about them. First, the Opposition have strangely failed to mention the concomitant powers in clause 198. We are offering huge powers for the first time to LEAs to withdraw delegated budgets. That is a powerful sanction, about which we heard nothing whatever from Opposition Members.

Secondly, the clear difference has been revealed between the acceptable face of the Opposition put up front by the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and that of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), who was only too anxious to reactivate class war and made most of his remarks around that theme. The hon. Member for Bridgend admitted, although his admission was heavily qualified, that there might be a case for an education association going into a school in certain circumstances, or where the alternative might otherwise be limbo or the abolition of the school.

Perhaps I could deal with the hon. Member for Devonport by assuring him—even if he is unable to pay attention to my remarks, having taken up the greater part of the debate—that no effective cost will fall to the LEA from any arrangement to transfer a school to an education association. It is an entirely administrative matter.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) eloquently said, anticipating the intervention that I would have made, the internal costs would be entirely reasonable given that the alternative would be a failed school which had ceased to exist.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Does the Minister agree that we have a strange and fearful precedent in hospital trusts? We have spent more money for more quangos and we are having to close more beds.

Mr. Boswell: I am sorry. Much as I like the hon. Gentleman, he is going rather wide of the mark. If I am to answer in eight minutes, I cannot go into hospital trusts. I should enjoy debating it on another occasion with the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) has an entirely proper interest in the standard of management in schools and the accountability of governors. All that I would say to him is that some of his remarks, as he acknowledged, related to an earlier stage in a school's decline than imminent fall. His remarks did not entirely relate to the amendments, but I noted what he said. It is within the spirit of some of the things that we would like to happen.

The amendments tabled by the official Opposition make no reference to the huge new power which is being given to LEAs to withdraw delegated budgets. Opposition Members made inadequate reference to the other significant power that we are providing. Where a school has received an at-risk report and the school and the LEA have considered an action plan, the LEA will have a power to appoint additional governors to county and controlled schools. I shall explain why the power is defined in that way.

The power has never existed under a Labour Government. We are now making it available. The hon. Member for Bridgend would do well not to look a gift horse in the mouth. We are giving local authorities sufficient powers, if they are capable of using them and if the people whom they select are appropriate, to turn schools round. They did not previously have those powers. We do not require the additional power which the Opposition propose in the amendments. That is why I shall advise my hon. Friends to resist the amendments in due course.

The reason why we do not want the further powers is that in the debate and the remarks made by Opposition Members there was a certain confusion—possibly it was a misunderstanding—between the power to appoint additional governors, which is enshrined in our proposals, and the powers of replacement of governors, to which Opposition Members referred.

I shall deal with the replacement matter first. We believe that it is proper for the local authority to be able to replace its own governors. The hon. Member for Bridgend referred to a particular case and cast doubt on whether that was possible. He referred to the relevant legislation in the Education (No. 2) Act 1986. In the case to which he referred, the LEA sought to remove LEA-appointed governors precisely because those governors planned to

[Mr. Boswell]

vote against the wishes of the LEA on the closure of the school to become a city technology college. That was a specific, not a general case.

In general, the LEA has the power to remove its own governors. The Opposition's proposal would enable the LEA to intervene and, if I may put it this way, "dis-appoint" governors whom it had not appointed. Co-opted governors whould be those appointed by the governing body as a whole, not by the LEA—although, undoubtedly, by LEA nominees. Foundation governors would have been appointed by the foundation. The House will wish to know that the foundation may in turn replace its governors of aided or special agreement schools. We are in discussion with the churches on a parallel power which does not exist now to enable the foundation to appoint additional governors. Such a power would be analogous with the power that we propose in clause 197.

So we do not believe that it is right to enable the local education authority to go beyond the power of appointment of additional governors to replace existing governors. The main reason why we feel that that would be inappropriate is that the LEA did not appoint the governors in the first place. In aided schools the foundation has the primary responsibility for appointing the majority of the governors. As he will know, the foundation contributes to the capital, maintenance and repair costs of the school and has a close and central role in preserving and enhancing the special ethos, often religious, of the school. So we believe that the position should be protected.

Our proposals provide full and sufficient powers to LEAs to appoint additional governors. I should say in parentheses that it would be a good idea if LEAs made sure that governors whom they had appointed functioned properly, unlike the gentleman who used to turn up for the first 10 minutes of meetings so that he was not recorded as an absentee and then left, about whom we have received a recent complaint.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): Like the Secretary of State?

Mr. Boswell: It has nothing to do with the Secretary of State, except that he received the letter. I am pleased that he is here to hear the debate.

Opposition Members do not seem fully to have appreciated that the number of additional members which LEAs can appoint is not constrained. One would normally expect it to be one or two. If it were necessary in order to seize control of a majority, the LEA could appoint up to the number which represents the majority of the committee so that it could turn matters round. That is fairly closely analogous to the Secretary of State's powers in grant-maintained schools to appoint additional members up to the number which would outnumber the first governors.

Amendment No. 17 is outrageous even by the standards that we have learnt to expect from the Labour party. It would enable the LEA to replace LEA or co-opted governors

"forthwith and without any obligation to consider representations made by or on behalf of any person affected".

That is summary justice with a vengeance.

I remind the House that we do not want the powers because we wish to use them regularly, or for some hidden agenda that the hon. Member for Devonport has contrived. We want them because we recognise the essential importance of saving failing schools if that is at all possible. We want local education authorities to have a reasonable chance to do so, but as a last resort we need to stand behind them with fall-back provisions so that we can take over with an education association. I am sure that my hon. Friends support the concept because we believe in putting parents first.

I advise the Opposition to consider the powers that we are offering to local education authorities to enhance their part in the process. I hope that they will understand that if local education authorities cannot come up with the goods, which might occasionally happen, it may be necessary to go to the next stage. We do not welcome or canvass that, but believe that it is absolutely necessary, in the interests of parents and their children.

It being Five o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Order [15 December] and Resolution [2 March], put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 236, Noes 274.

Division No. 168] **[5 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John

Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*

Monro, Sir Hector	Spink, Dr Robert
Montgomery, Sir Fergus	Spring, Richard
Moss, Malcolm	Sproat, Iain
Needham, Richard	Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Neubert, Sir Michael	Steen, Anthony
Newton, Rt Hon Tony	Stephen, Michael
Nicholls, Patrick	Stern, Michael
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*	Stewart, Allan
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*	Streeter, Gary
Norris, Steve	Sumberg, David
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley	Sweeney, Walter
Ottaway, Richard	Sykes, John
Page, Richard	Tapsell, Sir Peter
Paice, James	Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Patnick, Irvine	Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Patten, Rt Hon John	Thomason, Roy
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey	Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Pawsey, James	Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth	Thurnham, Peter
Pickles, Eric	Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*	Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*	Tracey, Richard
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael	Tredinnick, David
Rathbone, Tim	Trend, Michael
Redwood, John	Twinn, Dr Ian
Renton, Rt Hon Tim	Viggers, Peter
Richards, Rod	Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Riddick, Graham	Walden, George
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm	Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Robathan, Andrew	Waller, Gary
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn	Ward, John
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*	Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*	Waterson, Nigel
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*	Wells, Bowen
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*	Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela	Whitney, Ray
Sackville, Tom	Whittingdale, John
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim	Widdecombe, Ann
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas	Wilkinson, John
Shaw, David *(Dover)*	Willetts, David
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian	Wilshire, David
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*	Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Shersby, Michael	Wolfson, Mark
Sims, Roger	Wood, Timothy
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*	Yeo, Tim
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*	Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Soames, Nicholas	
Spencer, Sir Derek	**Tellers for the Noes:**
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*	**Mr. James Arbuthnot and**
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*	**Mr. Robert G. Hughes.**

Question accordingly negatived.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Questions on amendments moved by a member of the Government to the end of schedule 12 on the motion relating to clause 214.*

Question agreed to.

Clause 202

SUPERVISION OF EDUCATION ASSOCIATIONS BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Amendment made: No. 199, in page 121, line 16, at end insert—

'( ) Before giving a direction under this section, the Secretary of State shall consult the education association or (as the case may be) each education association to which the direction applies unless, for reasons of urgency, it is not in his opinion reasonably practicable for him to do so.'—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 212

PROPOSALS FOR ESTABLISHMENT, ETC. OF SCHOOLS BY LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Amendments made: No. 161, in page 126, line 2, leave out '(1)' and insert '(1A)'.

No. 162, in page 126, line 11, leave out 'in' and insert 'to'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 213

PROPOSALS FOR ESTABLISHMENT, ETC. OF VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS BY PROMOTERS, ETC.

Amendment made: No. 163, in page 126, line 39, leave out 'in' and insert 'to'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 214

DIRECTIONS TO BRING FORWARD PROPOSALS

Ordered,

That Clause No. 214 be divided into three Clauses, the first consisting of subsections (1) to (4), the second of subsections (5) to (8) and (11) *[Directions to bring forward proposals for additional provision in Directions to bring forward proposals to remedy excessive provision,* in maintained schools] and the third of the remaining subsections *[supplementary provisions]* and the third Clause be transferred to the end of line 38 on page 131.

Amendments made: No. 164, in page 127, line 16, leave out 'in' and insert 'to'.

No. 165, in page 128, line 9, leave out 'this section' and insert

'section No. or No. of this Act'.

No. 166, in page 128, line 12, leave out 'this section' and insert

'section *[in Directions to bring forward proposals to remedy excessive provision]* or *[Directions to bring forward proposals for additional provision in maintained schools]* of this Act'.

No. 167, in page 128, line 20, at end insert—

'( ) Proposals made in pursuance of an order under section *[Directions to bring forward proposals to remedy excessive provision]* of this Act may not be withdrawn without the consent of the Secretary of State and such consent may be given on such conditions (if any) as the Secretary of State considers appropriate.

( ) Notwithstanding anything in section 17 of this Act, a county or voluntary school is not eligible for grant-maintained status—

(a) if the local education authority have made any proposals in pursuance of an order under section *[Directions to bring forward proposals to remedy excessive provision]* of this Act to cease to maintain the school which have not been withdrawn and no determination whether or not to approve or implement the proposals has been made under section 12 of the Education Act 1980 or section 217 of this Act, or

(b) if the Secretary of State has made any proposals under section 215 of this Act for the local education authority to cease to maintain the school which have not been withdrawn and no determination whether or not to adopt the proposals has been made under section 217 of this Act.

( ) Section 242(4) and (5) of this Act does not apply in relation to any proposals under section 12(1)(d) or 13(1)(b) of the Education Act 1980 made in pursuance of an order under section *[Directions to bring forward proposals to remedy excessive provision]* of this Act'.

No. 168, in page 128, line 23, leave out

'or section 169 of this Act'.

No. 169, in page 128, line 25 leave out

'this section and sections 215'

and insert

'sections *[Directions to bring forward proposals to remedy excessive provision]*'.

No. 170, in page 128, line 29 leave out 'this section and sections 215'

and insert

'sections *[Directions to bring forward proposals to remedy excessive provision]*'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 215

PUBLICATION OF PROPOSALS BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Amendment made: No. 171, in page 129, line 45 leave out 'in' and insert 'to'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 216

PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO PROPOSALS

Amendments made: No. 172, in page 130, line 11 at end insert

'which he has not withdrawn'.

No. 173, in page 130, line 12 leave out

'subsection (5) of that section'

and insert

'section 215(5) of this Act'.

No. 174, in page 130, line 23 after 'authority', insert '(and not withdrawn)'.

No. 175, in page 130, line 28 after 'school', insert '(and not withdrawn)'.

No. 176, in page 130, line 29 after 'area', insert '(and not withdrawn)'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 217

ADOPTION OF PROPOSALS AND APPROVAL OF RELATED PROPOSALS

Amendments made: No. 177, in page 131, line 19 after 'adopt', insert

'with or without modifications, or determine not to adopt'.

No. 178, in page 131, line 23 leave out second 'the' and insert 'their'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 220

NATIONAL CURRICULUM

Mr. Don Foster: I beg to move amendment No. 104, in page 133, line 2, after 'Curriculum)', insert—

(a) in subsection (1)(b) (basic curriculum), after "which" there is added—

"—(i)",

(b) at the end of that subsection there is inserted—

"and

(ii) where the school provides secondary education, includes such arrangements for vocational education or training as may be prescribed for registered pupils of prescribed ages.",

(c) in subsection (2) for "subsection (1)(b)" there is substituted "subsection (1)(b)(i)", and

(d)'.

The amendment looks complicated on paper, but it is simple in practice. It seeks to insert vocational education or training into the basic curriculum for secondary schools. It aims to reform the national curriculum so that it comes closer to fulfilling the description of a national curriculum that is balanced and broadly based.

During the debate in Standing Committee, hon. Members agreed with the need to give equality of esteem and parity to both academic and vocational provision, which the amendment would allow. In skeleton form, it says:

"such arrangements . . . as may be prescribed for registered pupils of prescribed ages."

In the form presented, it would give the Secretary of State the power to prescribe the arrangements. In a fully developed form, I hope that it would seek to extend the role of the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority to advise on such arrangements for vocational educational and qualifications. Our debate in Committee covered some aspects of how the role of the SCAA could be extended to do that. The amendment is intended to address the principle of a balanced curriculum for secondary schools.

5.15 pm

In Committee, the Minister said:

"We want it"—

the national curriculum—

"in place to ensure that pupils no longer lose out on the fundamental skills, knowledge and understanding needed for all aspects of their adult life. It looks forward to what they will be doing in a few years' time and provides them with the necessary equipment for that task."

I am sure that the Minister had in mind not only academic work, but the world of work for pupils in secondary schools.

The Minister was particularly encouraging when he continued:

"We do not have closed minds and are prepared to keep the national curriculum under review."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 2 February 1993; c. 1314.]

The amendment gives the Minister an opportunity to demonstrate that he does not have a closed mind and is willing to continue the review of the national curriculum. I hope that in doing so he will give thought to the way in which he and his Conservative colleagues have sometimes talked about the importance of vocational education, but have rarely provided an opportunity for it fully to flower in our schools, not least because of their continued insistence on what they tend to call the gold standard of A-levels in our sixth forms. Only by breaking down the belief in the gold standard of A-levels will we be likely to move towards the parity of esteem that is frequently proposed and espoused by Conservative Members.

Amendment No. 104 will change parts of clause 2 of the Education Reform Act 1988. It will establish the context in which we should remember that clause 1 of that Act requires there to be a

"balanced and broadly based curriculum which—

(a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and"—

significantly—

"prepares such pupils for the opportunities, reponsibilities and experiences of adult life."

Clause 2 of the 1988 Act describes the national curriculum, but it is an incomplete description as it fails to take account of the parts in clause 1 referring to the preparation of pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

I accept that amendment No. 104 would radically change the nature of the national curriculum for secondary schools. It would comprise two parts: the existing structure of subjects covered by statutory requirements relating to programmes of study, attainment targets and assessment arrangements; and, separately, vocational education or training. Although the amendment is silent on the point, both parts of the restructured national curriculum should be governed by advice from one organisation—the new SCAA.

I think that the desirability of vocational education is accepted by all hon. Members. We must acknowledge that the vast majority of our secondary schools—90 per cent.

—and more than half our primary schools have some sort of link with local industry. That has been partly promoted by actions taken by the present Government, through the introduction of the technical and vocational education initiative, and their support for compacts. We must accept that in 1983 the Government set up the Business and Technician Education Council to promote vocational education and, more recently, with cross-support from all parties, they set up the National Council for Vocational Qualifications.

Such support from the Government and other parties has led to a major development of vocational education in many schools. That has also been supported by bodies outside the House. In 1989 the CBI report "Towards a Skills Revolution" recommended that national targets should be set for the overall achievement of qualifications in vocational education and training. The Government's White Paper "Education and Training for the 21st century" warmly welcomed that CBI initiative. Even the headmasters' conference got in on the act, saying that it would welcome opportunities to be involved in the planning of vocational courses which could be appropriately taught in our schools.

In the most recent general election, the Conservative party manifesto said:

"We will also continue to develop new high-quality national vocational qualifications, and introduce a new post-16 diploma which recognises achievements in both vocational and academic courses."

Therefore, it is beyond doubt that there is support on both sides of the House and outside the House for vocational education to become an important element in what goes on in our secondary schools. As I have already suggested, there is growing evidence that vocational education is taking place within our secondary schools.

The question, therefore, is: why am I so anxious to ensure that we have a major change in the national curriculum? It is simply that, without ensuring that vocational education is contained within the statutory framework of the national curriculum, there is no guarantee that the work will continue or develop and there is certainly no guarantee that it will have the parity of esteem that all of us have so often said that we seek.

In introducing such a requirement, I am aware that it will mean a major cut in what is contained within the national curriculum. Many hon. Members in previous debates have talked about the overloaded national curriculum and many others, teachers, parents and governors, have echoed that concern. I for one and my party are keen to see a major slimming down of the national curriculum so that we have a minimum curriculum entitlement and much greater opportunity for individuals to develop areas of expertise that are appropriate for the children in their schools.

A major revision of the national curriculum is necessary and I hope that it will take place with detailed consultation with all involved in the partnership that makes up our education service so that in due course we shall see a revised, slimmer national curriculum which includes within the statutory structure reference to vocational education.

The issue is one of principle about parity between academic and vocational qualifications. The thrust of the amendment is that all schools should fulfil the aims set out in section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988. The amendment introduces an entitlement to vocational education and training for pupils in secondary education as an element of a balanced curriculum aimed at preparing such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Therefore, I hope that it will gain the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Pawsey: I listened with considerable interest to the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). He advanced a powerful case for vocational education. But the problem is that the national curriculum has proved so successful that everyone now seems to want to get in on the act. The idea being advanced by the hon. Gentleman clearly has some virtues and sounds good, but I suspect that every hon. Member has his own idea of what subjects should be in the national curriculum and how much time should be allocated to them.

I noted with interest what the hon. Gentleman said about the need for schools to liaise with local industry. He was right to draw attention to the importance of the links that exist with local industry. I am well aware that secondary schools in my constituency are in close touch with local industries, to the benefit of school and industry alike.

There might, however, be a case for fewer subjects within the national curriculum. I see that I have the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), whose knowledge in this area is considerable. There is an argument that we should concentrate on a core curriculum of, say, English, maths, the sciences, history and geography, with those subjects taking up about 60 per cent. of the school timetable and with schools then deciding what time should be allocated to other subjects.

I appreciate that the principal reason given for the national curriculum during the passage of the 1988 Act was that some schools did not concentrate on the essential subjects and that much school time was being wasted on subjects which could only be described as peripheral. I am happy to say that that point had support from both sides of the House.

In the current educational climate, there does not seem to be an overwhelming requirement for such a prescriptive national curriculum as currently exists or as the hon. Gentleman would have. For example, much more information about schools and what is taking place within them is available today compared with 1987-88. For example, schools now issue reports and prospectuses. We read examination results and truancy tables. Inspections now take place every four years and we have more parent governors. There are even annual general meetings. I am therefore beginning to wonder whether the national curriculum is as necessary as it once was.

I acknowledge what the hon. Gentleman said, although I do not go along with his comments about A-levels and the gold standard. I believe passionately that A-level is the gold standard. The three-year British degree hinges on the quality of A-levels. If that is diminished, I am apprehensive about what will take place in our universities. The British degree remains the envy of the world and I do not wish to see it diminished or diluted in any way. Therefore, I hold firmly to the view that the A-level is the gold standard.

Mr. Enright: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that some form of baccalaureate, which some British children already take, is far preferable to the narrow rigidities of the A-level?

Mr. Pawsey: I have heard that argument advanced before, but I am not fully persuaded. Above all, I am concerned about tinkering with our examination structure; not all the new examinations which have been introduced have proved as successful as their authors would have wished. The A-level remains the touchstone of quality and I do not wish to see it diminished in any way.

5.30 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I congratulate the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) on his amendment. Nothing better exemplifies the two-tier nature of our education system than the gap between vocational and so-called academic education. The remarks of the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) reveal the gulf between those who pride themselves on their traditional view and those who consider that view to be increasingly outmoded and unhelpful to almost all, if not all, young people.

It is nonsense to suggest that there should be a split between vocational and traditional academic education in a modern society. It should not be necessary—this is not meant as a criticism—for such an amendment to have any relevance in our education system or to have to mention the need to increase and to enhance the role of vocational training.

Mr. Pawsey: The hon. Gentleman's speech reminds me of a point that I meant to make, and I will do so in this brief intervention. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that city technology colleges represent a way forward and provide an opportunity to bring vocational education on the scene. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that grant-maintained schools can specialise, to use the S-word? If they choose to specialise in technology, does that not represent a major step down the route that the hon. Gentleman favours?

Mr. Lloyd: I am afraid not. Schools are ghettoised, and then the claim is made that CTCs provide a different, better type of education. Certainly it is more expensive, but CTCs have not worked out too well. Their results show that they are not able consistently to claim that they are a means of enhancing technological education.

It is ridiculous to suggest also that many young people should be denied access to a vocational or technological strand in their education. Some years ago, the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) taught at Manchester grammar school, where it was the practice to subdivide boys at an early age into potential classicists, scientists and linguists. It is absurd to believe that young people can be segmented in that way, and destructive of their educational potential.

Mr. Pawsey: I remind the hon. Gentleman that his party did much to deny opportunities to our nation's children. As he knows, there used to be a tripartite system, comprising technical, grammar and secondary modern schools.

Mr. Jamieson: That was under Shirley Williams.

Mr. Pawsey: Yes, Shirley Williams—and the hon. Lady whose constituency I temporarily forget.

Mr. Jamieson: Finchley?

Mr. Pawsey: No, not Finchley. The hon. Gentleman thinks quickly, but not quickly enough.

Shirley Williams and the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) were the twin architects of the present comprehensive system. I do not believe that it has assisted education in the long term. The old tripartite system, which we successfully exported to Germany and which worked so well there, was the best in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That was a very long short intervention.

Mr. Lloyd: I can only agree, Mr. Morris. It is fair to place on record the fact that Lady Thatcher closed more grammar schools than anyone else. Legislation is on the statute book to be used not so much as a mandate as at the discretion of the Secretary of State. It was Lady Thatcher who destroyed the system that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth holds dear.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: The hon. Gentleman referred to the tremendously good school at which I had the privilege to teach between 1960 and 1965. He was critical of Manchester grammar school because at that time it operated rigorous entry selection and streaming procedures, and a division was made between those who were to specialise in the classics, mathematics, or languages.

The hon. Gentleman rather overstated the downside. The school is now independent because the Opposition, when in government, destroyed the old grant system—more's the pity. However, in those past days the school produced some superbly and broadly educated people—some of whom, I believe, entered the ranks of the civil service: for all I know, they may be sitting nearby and listening to this debate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will concede that his criticism was a little ill judged and that Manchester grammar school produced well educated and rounded people. Nevertheless, I understand his basic point.

Mr. Lloyd: There may not be such a huge difference between the hon. Member and myself. I was making the point that it would be unacceptable at Manchester grammar school and most private schools to go down the road that the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth favours, and adopt the tripartite system—under which those whom the hon. Gentleman thinks are worthy would receive a grammar school education, those who are considered less worthy would recieve a technical education and those dismissed as educationally irrelevant would be given a secondary modern education.

Representing as I do a constituency that will operate the selective system, and remembering as I do the old tripartite system and all the problems of ghettoisation under it, I know that there can be no returning. We must find means of producing the rounded education for all young people that the hon. Member for Norwich, North urges upon me. I hope that he will urge it upon the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth, who is chairman of the Conservative Back-Bench education committee.

Mr. Pawsey: I am a little puzzled by the hon. Gentleman's views of the extraordinary word "ghettoisation". I do not know whether he takes credit for it or whether it is imported from the United States—in either case, I do not like it, and it is inaccurate. The hon. Gentleman is right to refer to three strands, but each strand provided the right type of education for the particular child entering it. As the hon. Gentleman knows,

[Mr. Pawsey]

I am the product of an elementary school and a technical school. I may not have enjoyed the privileged education experienced by the hon. Gentleman, but the tripartite system worked. I regret that it does not still operate in the United Kingdom. It was abolished and sacrificed on the altar of comprehensive education.

Mr. Lloyd: That is where the hon. Gentleman and I disagree, and he disagrees with a number of his colleagues. The tripartite system did not work. It failed far too many of our young people, and continues to do so in some parts of the country. In the spirit of the amendment, we are seeking to abolish the silly and arbitrary divisions that were built over the years between academic education and so-called non-academic education in vital areas of vocational education.

Mr. Pawsey *rose*——

Mr. Lloyd: If the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, I have hardly progressed further than my opening remarks because of interventions.

Vocational education is important not only to individual learning but to the nation's future. If we fail our young people by neglecting to provide them with an adequate vocational education, we shall have begun to fail the nation.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to the concept of the A-level as the "gold standard" of our system. Like other gold standards, it has become devalued in itself, and in itself it devalues other qualifications. As long as we have a Secretary of State who is committed to that gold standard, while paying lip service to the idea of equivalence between A-levels and other qualifications—national vocational qualifications in particular—and as long as the A-level examination continues to be paraded as the primary aim of our academic system, NVQs will be devalued. That is not acceptable in a modern society which is trying to promote the values of vocational education.

The NVQ system is important. It is no longer merely an experiment; it should be applauded in its own right, as a valuable stepping stone. Of course, if we are to transcend both the present NVQ system and the present A-level system, we must provide a qualifications base that is excellent in itself, allowing young people to aspire to the highest standards. We must maintain what Conservative Members believe exists in the A-level system—although I doubt that it does. We must also ensure that all young people can aspire to the same high level of attainment. If we do not do that, we shall fail the majority through our pursuit of the vacuous view that the minority—the academic elite—are more important than all the rest.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): Surely A-levels and NVQs are not incompatible. We have encouraged students to take a couple of A-levels and some AS-levels to broaden the base of their education. There is no reason why the same should not apply to NVQs. Heads and class teachers in a number of schools are now encouraging pupils not to go for the traditional three A-levels—or even for four or five, in the case of high fliers—but to spread their education in a way that I think we would all favour. We need first to give such an educational spread the blessing and imprimatur of Government and Parliament, and then to educate employers and higher education establishments so that they accept such qualifications.

Mr. Lloyd: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's objectives, but I am not sure that such methods would achieve the result that he wants. The AS-level system has not been a tremendous success; it has not been adopted in many areas, and is still viewed with suspicion—or, at any rate, is seen as less than relevant.

I doubt whether it is feasible to combine the A-level system—which is a specialising and, in my opinion, very narrowing system—with the NVQ system, which is supposedly intended to create a broad educational plateau. Such a combination would be fraught with difficulties. I am not at all happy about the aim of the A-level system.

One of my children is now faced with a choice of the subjects that she will study next year if she is able to continue in education after GCSEs. She is being forced fairly young to reject a good many options. What matters is not which subjects she chooses to take, but the subjects that she must drop. The A-level syllabus is forcing her to narrow her educational opportunities while still relatively young: in that regard, the system is fundamentally flawed.

It is ridiculous to claim that we are trying to produce 18-year-old specialists. For instance, three language A-levels do not constitute a sufficient qualification to allow a young person to work as a linguist, although they may be an acceptable qualification for those wishing to read for a language degree. There is almost no merit in the idea of trying to achieve such a degree of specialisation at that age: indeed, it has been rejected by a good many countries, in which it is regarded as a very silly way of trying to educate young people. At present, the necessary educational breadth does not exist.

5.45 pm

My hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) suggested the introduction of an international baccalaureate—a broadly based and challenging qualification that could raise all young people's aspirations. I think that that suggestion is along the right lines: it would allow the blending of courses and interests recommended by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). If that is indeed the hon. Gentleman's intention, we are on common ground; but the present arrangement, in which an elitist academic A-level system exists alongside a non-elitist, devalued system for those who pursue a vocational line, is far from helpful.

The Secretary of State introduced some semantic confusion by describing the key stage 3 English testing as a means of resolving the problems of illiteracy. Yesterday, at Question Time, he mentioned a report according to which up to a third of young people leaving school at 16 and going on to further education colleges need remedial help in understanding English—after 14 years of Conservative government. The very fact that the Secretary of State chose to highlight that finding is an indictment of both the right hon. Gentleman and his predecessors; but he went on to say that the testing involved in key stage 3 would resolve the problems, which is a sign of the educational illiteracy of Ministers who are charged with looking after young people's education.

It is clear that the whole key stage 3 debacle has been driven by an ideological approach to education. The

Secretary of State has decided that he wants to take on and beat the teaching profession for ideological reasons, rather than being prepared to listen to the arguments of those involved directly with pupils and, in his search for consensus, to establish a broader base for the education of both the under-16s and the over-16s.

I agree with the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster): if we are to bring about the revolution that education needs, we must begin to seek consensus in earnest. A consensual approach must be adopted not only by the Opposition parties—whose opinion is shared by the overwhelming majority in educational circles—but by the Government. We must seek to break down the artificial barriers that fail so many young people, and begin to replace them with the methods and mechanisms that will ensure access to the best possible qualifications for all our young people.

Mr. Pawsey: Conservative Members are enjoying the hon. Gentleman's speech—although I shall not comment on its content.

The tripartite system we exported to Germany actually works. Everyone says so: people even say that the German economic miracle is a result of the country's education system. If it works so well there, why should we not import it back into the United Kingdom, and make it work here?

Mr. Lloyd: There is a simple answer to that. The Germans do not make the mistake of devaluing certain forms of educational achievement.

Mr. Pawsey: Why should we do so?

Mr. Lloyd: As long as we retain a system that reifies such a devaluation—a system that is hierarchical from beginning to end—those who have failed at the various stages involved in that system will inevitably be regarded as failures, both by themselves and by society generally. We must get away from that approach. We must introduce the concept of comprehensive education not only in the institutional sense but in the broadest sense. We must provide access to education for all young people.

The German experience is especially interesting. Of course we should begin to value technological education. We are—perhaps I should say, we were—a technological nation, but we devalue, for example, the engineer. It is a matter of record that engineers leaving our universities are not offered the same rates of pay or opportunities as others. Not many engineers make their way into the board rooms of industry——

Mr. Jamieson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Lloyd: May I finish this point? A liberal education is a perfectly reasonable form of education and fits people for many things in life, but those who train as engineers should also be able to make their way into the boardrooms.

Mr. Jamieson: The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) said that we should return to the tripartite system. If there is supposed to be pressure for a return to that system, with testing at 11 and the reintroduction of secondary moderns, why are parents not calling for the return of selection?

It is a pity that the hon. Member for Solihull (Mr. Taylor) is not here, because he could recount the experience of 1984, when a Tory council tried to reintroduce the 11-plus, which caused a massive protest from Tory voters in the borough. They strongly resisted the return of the 11-plus, because they have an excellent comprehensive system which they do not wish to destroy.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend makes an important point. When a return to selective education has been suggested, it has usually been resisted not only by parents but often by Conservative councillors, who are not persuaded of the benefit of such a change. I speak with some feeling about selective education because, as I said, the area in which I live retains that system. The hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth has a similar experience. It is a bad system, which fails far too many people.

During our debates, it has been constructive to note that the schools which have so far sought to opt out have not been the comprehensive schools in the other boroughs of Greater Manchester but the secondary moderns in Trafford. They are so dissatisfied with their second-rate treatment from the Conservative local education authority that they want to get out of its control. One school in particular, not in my constituency, has successfully balloted to opt out on the specific propsectus that it will seek a change of status from secondary modern to comprehensive. It believes that it is the only way it can attract young people in sufficient numbers to remain viable in competition with other schools in the area.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) said, there is no demand across the board for a tripartite system. I do not want to put words into the mouths of Conservative Members, but I did not detect a massive groundswell among them in favour of its return. It is antithetical to what the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) was saying. He may wish to say that institutions are prepared to accept that system, but it was not in keeping with the spirit of his remarks. Having mentioned him, I shall give way.

Mr. Bowis: We are seeking common ground, but uniformity is not necessarily the best way forward. If the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) would give a little on the uniformity of the structure of the school system, he would do much more for education. We seek a great variety of schools—city technology colleges, grant-maintained schools, magnet schools, single-sex schools, co-educational schools, Church schools, non-denominational schools and others. His party tends to want one type of school for all children; he could give way on that uniformity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) made an excellent speech, suggesting that it is perhaps time to examine the national curriculum to ascertain where we should be clawing it in to allow a greater range of teaching over and above the core. That would lead to the measures on which this debate is centred.

Mr. Lloyd: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I say that that is paramount nonsense. We do not want to institutionalise the divisions between schools to prevent access to those who are perfectly capable and should be allowed to benefit from the opportunities available. Of course there should be variety in our education system, but variety driven by a coalition of parents, the young people themselves, teachers, the professionals to whom we entrust the future of our young people and even, dare I say it, institutions such as local education authorities. Those authorities can structure

[Mr. Lloyd]

careers services, which can give the quality advice, which youngsters are clearly not getting at the moment. We should be tackling the failure rates in, for example, further education, as set out in a recent Audit Commission report.

Of course there should be variety within our system. Individual children have different aptitudes and orientations and we should welcome that fact and glory in that diversity. However, the way in which we respond to that diversity should not, as so often happens now, exclude children from poor backgrounds or those from the inner cities and ethnic minorities. They do not have access to the opportunities to which they are entitled.

Mr. Don Foster: The hon. Gentleman made an important point when he chided the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) about the desire to institutionalise divisions. Is not the debate about trying to break down those divisions? Does the hon. Gentleman agree that there is a belief that only academic work is important? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Conservative Members are saying no. I accept that some have been involved in the development of vocational education, but it is still not given parity of esteem, which is the crucial issue. It is extremely important that even children who are following highly academic courses have an opportunity to be involved in vocational education, which is why the amendment is vital. We want parity of esteem between academic and vocational work, instead of the current division in attitude among Conservative Members between vocational and academic qualifications.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) is absolutely right. Such parity of esteem would apply in our better public schools, because the idea that expensive public schools would fail their pupils by denying them access to vocational education is ridiculous. Parents would not tolerate that or be prepared to fork out money for such schooling.

We are prepared to seek consensus with those who genuinely want to break down the divisions and who want the parity of esteem which exists in Germany, which the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth mentioned. However, we cannot seek consensus with those whose actions, if not their motivation, merely institutionalise the divisions and deny some young people access to vocational and non-vocational education in our publicly funded system. That is the reality of education today, which is why it is so important that the amendment is accepted—and why the Labour party will vote for it.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: I am grateful for the opportunity to say a brief word about the amendment. I have been interested to listen to the debate so far, and occasionally I have almost experienced a meeting of minds with the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). At the beginning of his speech he talked about the importance of emphasising vocational education. There I totally agree with him, and with the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), who also stressed the importance of vocational education when he moved the amendment. I suspect that my hon. Friends accept those remarks.

Despite the Manchester connection, however, the meeting of minds does not usually last long. The hon. Member for Stretford suffers from a failure of imagination. Like so many Opposition Members, he seems unable to visualise any kind of education other than comprehensive education supervised by local education authorities. As I have said before, there are many good comprehensive schools and local education authorities—but the Opposition suffer from a failure of imagination, in that they are always coming back to defend the status quo. They refuse to accept the excellent points made by my hon. Friends the Members for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) and others. It is that failure of imagination that causes the Opposition problems.

6 pm

I hope that at least we agree on the funadamental importance of vocational education, as emphasised by the hon. Members for Stretford and for Bath. I, too, want to emphasise its importance, but I differ with the hon. Member for Bath and feel that his amendment is wrong. He gave the game away himself when he argued at some length that, in spite of recent Government moves to simplify and compress the national curriculum, it still covered too wide a range of subjects and activities. Indeed it does—so I support my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth in his desire to move further in the opposite direction from that suggested by the hon. Member for Bath. As I understand it, the hon. Gentleman's idea—I shall give way to him in a moment if I am misunderstanding it—is an ever-expanding national curriculum designed to achieve some kind of hypothetical parity of esteem.

I am highly suspicious when people start talking about parity of esteem in education. Such phrases are traps into which politicians fall. They are totally meaningless.

Mr. Foster *rose*——

Mr. Thompson: If I am misunderstanding the hon. Gentleman, I will give way to him and then respond to what he says.

Mr. Foster: If the hon. Gentleman has difficulty understanding phrases such as "parity of esteem" he should talk to many of his hon. Friends who have used that phrase in speeches. It has also been used in many documents issued by the Conservative party. The concept of parity of esteem is well accepted by the vast majority of people in the education world. It makes us sad that the hon. Gentleman sees vocational education as merely another little subject by itself to be squeezed into the already jam-packed national curriculum. The simple point that I was making to the hon. Gentleman and to his right hon. and hon. Friends is that the national curriculum is already massively overloaded and allows none of that diversity in individual schools that Conservative Members want to see. It is perfectly possible significantly to diminish——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is a very long intervention.

Mr. Thompson: I think that I have picked up the general drift of the hon. Gentleman's intervention, without his pursuing it further. He has—possibly deliberately—misunderstood what I said about parity of esteem. Whenever my hon. Friends refer to parity of esteem I always agree with them, because they are using the phrase correctly.

However, the hon. Gentleman has again said something with which I agree—that the national curriculum is overloaded. Some problems have arisen, and the debate between the Government, the local authorities and the schools is valid. We should move further towards slimming down the national curriculum—the Government have already made moves in that direction, and some of my hon. Friends have referred to it. Speaking for myself, and from my experience as a teacher——

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Thompson: May I finish my point first? I hope that we shall have a meeting of minds in a moment.

We should be moving in the direction of basic standards, not only those required for further progress in academic education but also as they are required for movement into vocational education. The hon. Member for Bath, with the best of intentions, has introduced a red herring into the debate, and his amendment is ill advised.

Mr. Lloyd *rose*——

Mr. Thompson: Despite the pressure of time, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Stretford, because I referred to his speech.

Mr. Lloyd: The debate may be more important than people imagine, because there is clearly much more of a meeting of minds than might have been expected. Of course we agree with the concept of basic standards, especially when the hon. Gentleman explains that basic standards are not seen in terms of academic subjects alone —that is most important. May I put him on the spot and ask him a question? He is right to talk about the need to slim down the national curriculum. Can he tell us what movement the Government have made in that direction? We have yet to detect any. That is not a flippant question; it is serious. If we genuinely thought that the Government were moving, that would be a matter for rejoicing.

Mr. Thompson: I have detected certain signs of movement from the Government—[HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to elaborate on that when he responds to the debate. *[Interruption.]* There is a meeting of minds here, because I would press my hon. Friend to go even further in slimming down the national curriculum—so let us not have a disagreement across the Floor of the House about that. I suspect that if he did so we could move away from some of the stresses and strains in schools of which hon. Members on both sides of the House are aware.

Mr. Win Griffiths *rose*——

Mr. Thompson: No, pressure of time prevents me from giving way now.

The amendment of the hon. Member for Bath, although moved with the best of intentions, is ill advised. If there is basic education in elementary mathematics, that will lead pupils on not only to academic progress in mathematics but to technical and vocational education. If there is basic education in English, spelling and grammar —I use those terms proudly—that will help pupils to move on into clerical activity, secretarial work and more advanced forms of management training. Basic language skills, too, will be of tremendous value when pupils move on to vocational training of one sort or another.

There is a meeting of minds in the House and elsewhere on the desperate importance to the nation of encouraging more and better vocational education—I know that the Government seek to do that in all sorts of ways which are not the subject of the debate. Nevertheless, I shall finish now—I wanted to be brief—by saying that the amendment is ill advised and that I hope that my hon. Friends will support the Government and reject it.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): I had not intended to speak in the debate, but so many important points have been raised by hon. Members on both sides of the House that I decided to make a brief contribution to a useful discussion on an important issue.

One of the reasons why our education system has been seen as a failure compared with those of other countries is the division between vocational and academic education. All hon. Members want that division to be removed, and in the past few years steps have been taken in an effort to remove it. It was initiatives by local education authorities which began the process. The Government seized upon the idea and introduced a technical and vocational education initiative in the mid-1980s, making funds available for local authorities to bid for to provide vocational courses in secondary schools. Many authorities had already begun that process, but they welcomed the prospect of Government financial support to carry it forward.

It is interesting to compare our approach with that of Germany, for example, where the academic/vocational divide is not seen in terms of academic education being reserved for the most able pupils while vocational education is for the less able. That does not happen in Germany, where the most able children feel free to embark on vocational courses. There is often a real mix between the academic and the vocational, and one side is not seen as having greater priority than the other. That is one reason why Opposition Members would like to look closely at the German system so that we can perhaps develop in that direction.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I was a little puzzled when the hon. Gentleman began to elaborate on the division in education in Britain and then praised Germany. In Germany there are separate schools for academic and technological education. I was interested in the drift of the hon. Gentleman's argument because one of the major problems in Britain which is almost unique in Europe is our adhesion—in my view, misguided—to comprehensive education. I suspect that, to achieve the best technological and academic education opportunities, we shall have to follow the German model and abandon comprehensive education.

Mr. Byers: That is an important subject which I should like to discuss, but I want to give the Minister sufficient time to reply to the debate. I am mindful that the Minister wishes to speak for a particular length of time.

I was seeking to point out that, although in Britain the academic is seen to be the preserve of the most able while the less able follow vocational training, in Germany that division does not exist. The most able students often follow vocational training. Comprehensive education can include academic and vocational training and the most able and the less able students can choose either of those options.

We have to take a radical approach to A-levels, which totally dominate our education system and all too often

[Mr. Byers]

are the dead hand on curriculum development. One reason for our failure has been the gold standard of the A-level. The Government alone stand by the A-level. Everyone else is saying that it has to be changed.

We also need to address the structure of Government. It is not appropriate to have a Department for Education but for training to be the responsibility of the Department of Employment. The time has come to have one Department responsible for education and training. That would be a positive lead at the highest level to demonstrate that there is no division between education and training and that they should be treated as of equal value. I welcome the recent appointment of a permanent secretary at the Department for Education whose background is mostly in the Department of Employment; that may herald a drift towards bringing training into the remit and responsibilities of the Department for Education.

I wanted to make a short speech and I am sure that we shall listen with interest to the Minister's reply.

Mr. Boswell: There are occasions when despite all the sound and fury there is an element of consensus in the House, and I have listened with interest to the debate. That is not to say that we agree on every point, but it has been possible to pick up certain strands of agreement.

To summarise, we heard characteristically trenchant and well-informed speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson). We also heard a characteristically magisterial intervention of the kind that we have become used to expecting from my hon Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). We had a new entrant, a former old lag of our Department, if I may put it that way, in the shape of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) who also made a powerful intervention. They will forgive me if I do not speak at great length on their speeches and direct my remarks—though not confine them—to those made by the Opposition.

Listening to the speech of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), who moved the amendment that I shall invite my colleagues to resist, it occurred to me that he speaks with a measure of dogged reasonableness and is always anxious to include and please. One might say, in the motto of a well-known Sunday newspaper, that in his prescription all human life is there. Not only is he conscious of the heavy load already in the national curriculum; he wants to add to it and, indeed, strip away from it in order to add to it. I cannot help feeling that in Committee and on Report he has functioned as the agony aunt of the Committee—what one might term at the least charitable, which I am not often, as "Banal of Bath".

6.15 pm

We listened to a long and characteristically passionate oration from the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd). For one awful moment I thought that, in view of the number of propositions he was setting up, I would have to encapsulate him as, "Aunt Sally from Stretford" because he was talking about "ghettoisation" and ideological agendas. He dragged in the entirely spurious suggestion that the controversy about key stage 3 testing was regarded as ideological on our side, which I emphatically deny. That did not add to his argument; nevertheless, I listened to the substance of what he said.

I turn to a point that was rehearsed across both sides of the House and fairly extensively in Committee. I noted the concern of hon. Members on both sides of the House about the heavy load in the existing national curriculum and their inference that it might need to be lightened. The hon. Member for Stretford should acknowledge that we have already taken steps to introduce more flexibility at key stage 4 and to reduce some of the requirements to accommodate particular circumstances.

We are debating the new School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and its role, which we consider most important. If there are any doubts, the national curriculum is not set in stone. That is not immediately to be interpreted as suggesting that it is to be totally and radically changed every so often at whim, but the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority will be charged with the duty of analysing it, reviewing the subject heads and seeing whether it can be improved. That will be a continuing process of rolling review which I am sure all hon. Members will welcome.

I now turn to an issue where there is particular difference between the hon. Member for Stretford and myself. My hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth struck back strongly on the attitude to A-levels. If it is necessary for people to come out, as it were, I was obliged to specialise at the age of 14; I regretted it at the time and continued to regret it, and to some extent have found ways of rowing back. That was not the normal structure of A-levels and people would not be driven to that course until the age of 16, but I regard it as over-narrow and we are addressing it within the national curriculum.

The hon. Gentleman was rather uncharitable about AS-levels. There were more than 50,000 entries for AS-levels last year. Indeed, one of them was one of my daughters, who received a very acceptable grade. One fifth of all A-level entrants take an AS-level as part of their entry. It is mistaken to set up an Aunt Sally suggesting that we are not interested in qualifications outside A-levels. It is important to have a standard to which others can be related. I do not accept that it devalues the system of vocational qualifications. The hon. Gentleman did not answer the question. "Devalued from what?" as though we had set a vocational standard and then succeeded in rubbishing it.

Mr. Walden: It seems to me that there is a certain amount of hypocrisy, not in my hon. Friend the Minister's position, but in that of others regarding A-levels. My view is that there is a wide intellectual consensus, which I share, on the need to broaden A-levels, perhaps on the French model. I am strongly against broadening A-levels at this juncture because I have no confidence in the ability of the education industry to do that without taking the opportunity of lowering expectations, yet again, across the board. I have no confidence in its ability to produce the high, broad expectations which exist in the baccalauréat in France.

Mr. Boswell: I have noted my hon. Friend's remarks carefully. I shall now explain to the House how we see ourselves being able to set up alternative measures and alternative routes.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The intervention by the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) is important because it encapsulates some of the attitudes shown in this debate.

Does the Minister agree with what the hon. Gentleman has said? It is important for the Minister to place on record his agreement or disagreement with the hon. Gentleman's proposition.

Mr. Boswell: I am slightly surprised that the hon. Gentleman wants me to answer multiple or even dual-choice questions. However, I will give him an answer. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham is that any change in A-levels, if not carefully considered and properly argued through, would not necessarily maintain standards. We have already opened up the possibility of acceptable, more narrowly focused studies through AS-levels.

On the narrow point of the amendment, which deals with technical education in schools——

Mr. Foster: Vocational education.

Mr. Boswell: It was a slip of the tongue. The hon. Gentleman's intervention enables me to make the remark that I had intended to make. Despite his understandable enthusiasm for vocational education, the amendment does not mention the word "technology". I do not know whether technology is included in vocational education, as the hon. Gentleman sees it.

Mr. Don Foster: I am sure that the Minister is well aware that technology is currently included in the national curriculum.

Mr. Boswell: I am most certainly aware of that precise point. I do not see how, if the hon. Gentleman seeks to slim down the curriculum for the sake of vocational concerns and to safeguard the existing technology commitment, he would be able to deal with, for example, modern foreign languages. If the hon. Gentleman is simply saying that the national curriculum, as delivered up to key stage 4, should require a broad education which moves towards acceptable pathways to vocation and training in the future, and if that curriculum is to include science, technology, mathematics and other subjects which may be said to have a vocational handle—just as communications skills and English have a vocational handle—I would not disagree much with him. However, we are not convinced of the need to prescribe vocational education as such as part of the national curriculum.

I repeat to the House that the Education Reform Act 1988 already requires that the curriculum of a school should prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. The hon. Member for Bath rightly and fairly referred to the technical and vocational education initiative and to our reform of the Business and Technician Education Council, a subject with which I shall deal later.

I remind the hon. Gentleman that the curriculum is intended to cover the range of knowledge, skills and understanding commonly accepted as necessary for a broad and balanced curriculum for the individual pupil, as set out in the 10 foundation subjects. By the age of 14—there is no dissent on this point—it is entirely appropriate for young people to gain some experience of pre-vocational education. I do not want the House to confuse that with strictly vocational education. In most cases, one would anticipate that vocational education or the further stage of education would take place in the institutions for which I am responsible, after the compulsory school age and in some other provision. We do not need to confine the provision to being a strictly vocational education at that stage.

As we move into the 14 to 16-year-old group and to key stage 4, we build on the sense of anticipation of the future —the motivation to move into the world of work. That is why we introduced the element of flexibility to which I referred. I shall come back to that point because it is a strong part of our concern and of my personal commitment.

I shall now deal with the national curriculum because hon. Members have referred to the attainments of pupils in terms of basic skills and to the failure of too many to achieve them during the period of compulsory schooling. Hon. Members have referred to the fact that many people now in further education have to have remedial education. I am not satisfied with that and I am determined that we should improve on that position, although it is by no means an easy task and it requires a variety of approaches.

We need the national curriculum to start the process. As I said to the hon. Member for Bath, the national curriculum provides for science and technology from year one right through to year 11. That is not mirrored in the curriculum of any other European state of which I am aware. The big process, which we are now taking forward with the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, has been a major success. Five years ago, it was barely an aspiration. Many people said that it could not be done or that it would not be successful.

We are now teaching some science and technology to every child between the ages of five and nine, and to every child between 11 and 14 in maintained schools. We shall carry the process through to ensure that all pupils between 15 and 16 in those schools receive a balanced education relevant to future needs and set in a clear overall framework. We want to raise teachers' and parents' expectations for children.

I shall now deal with the question of what happens after compulsory schooling, which is an area of direct and day-to-day concern to me, and I shall deal with the issue of parity of esteem. With the greatest respect to the House, the parity of esteem that we do not seek is that to which we give lip service here. The real parity of esteem is that perceived by employers, by admissions tutors and by admissions officers in higher education. They are the people who are making judgments on the basis of what is offered to them.

There are already encouraging signs of movement towards non-traditional entry routes and towards a more flexible approach, for example, to mature students. I give one example: already 20 per cent. of students entering higher education for engineering degrees have had non-traditional pathways into that education. There is growing interaction between higher national diplomas and people moving to degree qualifications.

As has been said, we are establishing a structure of vocational qualifications to parallel A-levels and to provide two alternative routes. The national vocational qualifications that are mainly talked about partake of specific vocational skills. There are also general NVQs, which are being piloted and developed. I have looked at the GNVQ curriculum for business studies and I have compared it with the typical A-level in business studies. It is an attractive alternative, although my decision is not what matters: what is important is what is taught and what is available to employers to consider. I remind the House

[Mr. Boswell]

that GNVQ at level 3 is to be equivalent to two A-levels, which is an important point of standard. It is not the qualification but the level at which it is taken which is critical.

That approach is to be accompanied by a far more hands-on and direct effort to give proper career advice to those who are about to leave their compulsory school years as to whether they should stay within the schools sector or move elsewhere. There is no false antithesis here. Some of the biggest deliverers of A-levels, which are rubbished by some hon. Members including the hon. Member for Stretford, are the further education colleges, so they have an interest in the delivery of, and proper use for, the A-level system.

Alongside that, we are offering for the first time—it is a breakthrough which will contribute to the objective that we all seek of building up the effective parity of the scheme—a coherent structure of vocational qualifications. It is a comprehensive structure, if I may use that phrase, in that it covers all the major curriculum areas. It is also a comprehensible area in the sense that young people wanting to move on towards the world of work and to get acceptable vocational qualifications, with a general educational element and some core skills that they can use in their future careers, will have something to go for. It is not a question of devaluing, removing or cheapening A-level or reducing standards, but——

It being half past Six o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 245, Noes 275.

Division No. 169] **[6.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James

Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Deputy Speaker *then put the Questions on amendments moved by a member of the Government, to the end of clause 256.*

Clause 242

POWER TO MAKE AND DEAL WITH SUCH PROPOSALS IN THE CASE OF SCHOOLS ELIGIBLE FOR GRANT-MAINTAINED STATUS

Amendments made: No. 52, in page 145, line 38, leave out first 'the' and insert 'any'.

No. 53, in page 145, line 41, leave out 'both sets of proposals' and insert

'the proposals under section 12 or 13 of that Act or section 241 of this Act and the proposals for acquisition of grant-maintained status'.

No. 54, in page 146, line 13, leave out '(3)' and insert '(5)'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Clause 257

PROVISION OF GOODS AND SERVICES BY LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I beg to move amendment No. 122, in page 153, line 12, after '(2)', insert

'where an order relates to a local education authority in England.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 121, in page 153, line 14, at end insert—

'(2A) Where an order relates to a local education authority in Wales, the area specified in the Order may extend to the whole of Wales.'.

No. 120, in page 153, leave out lines 21 to 23.

No. 198, in page 153, line 25, at end add—

'(6) Any order under this section shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.

Mr. Dafis: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the amendments in this small but significant group.

The issues with which the clause and the amendments are concerned have been debated at length already, in Committee and last night. The fact that this is a matter of great concern was evident from Conservative Members' eloquent speeches last night about the provision of the music service, to which I shall return.

Amendment No. 120 would remove the two-year limit after which LEAs would not be allowed to sell services to schools in other LEA areas or to grant-maintained schools. Amendments No. 122 and 121, which I drafted myself, would enable services to be sold by any LEA to the schools of any other LEA in Wales and to grant-maintained schools in any other part of Wales.

I emphasise that, if Opposition Members' only concern were to sabotage the grant-maintained movement, we should not have tabled amendment No. 120. The non-availability to grant-maintained schools of LEA services after two years is likely to act as a strong disincentive to schools to become grant maintained. The Under-Secretary of State for Schools confirmed that last night when he said:

"If parents decide that relying on the continuance of LEA provision of the kind to which their school is accustomed is of paramount importance to them, perhaps that school is not the right sort to become grant maintained."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 206.]

The hon. Gentleman actually admitted that the non-provision of services might be a disincentive to some schools to become grant maintained. We are not being driven by ideology in this: we are not in the business of sabotaging the grant-maintained movement at this time.

It is worth mentioning the fact that only after a period of about two years will schools in Wales be going grant maintained at all, so in effect they will be unable to benefit from the services anyway. Opposition Members are driven not by ideology but by the wish to ensure that, if the grant-maintained sector grows and develops, the mixed system that will then exist should be able to work with the minimum amount of damage being done to pupils. That is our main concern.

6.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools (Mr. Eric Forth): It is important that the ground rules should be clear. The restrictions will not even operate if only a few schools have become grant maintained. Only when a local education authority experienced a significant number of schools becoming grant maintained and exceeded its margin of capacity would the question even arise. The two-year period would start from that point, allowing a transitional period during which the appropriate adjustments could be made. It is important to understand that.

Mr. Dafis: I accept that and I shall come to the question of the margin of capacity in a moment.

I emphasise that amendment No. 120 does no more than propose that there should be a level playing field between the public and private sectors. If Conservative Members are saying that it is not possible to identify the true cost of services provided by LEAs—that has been suggested—and so ensure that there is a level playing field, they are saying, in effect, that they regard local authorities as perfidious and in the business of cheating. Some Conservative Members—not all—clearly believe that. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) clearly regards LEAs and local authorities as essentially perfidious bodies. Conservative Members must take a dim view of the extent of human ingenuity if they do not believe that it is possible for human beings to devise a system whereby the true costs of providing services can be identified.

That is not the view of the Secretary of State for Wales. The White Paper on local government reorganisation in Wales states that local authorities in Wales will be encouraged, as a matter of good practice, to introduce an internal accounting framework for corporate and other services and to expose them to competition as soon as possible. Clearly, the Secretary of State believes that it is possible to develop an accounting procedure which makes it possible to identify the true costs of services provided by local education authorities and local government generally.

Under the Bill as drafted, LEA schools will have a choice as to where they obtain their services: they can get them from the LEA or from the private sector. Grant-maintained schools, however, will not have that choice. On the face of it, the Bill seems to discriminate against grant-maintained schools as much as it discriminates against LEA service providers. In that context, it is worth asking which principle is more important to the Government: the promotion of grant-maintained schools, or the discouragement of the public sector as providers?

Some people in the grant-maintained movement and in the semi-independent sector say that they cannot understand why the Government insist on the prohibition coming into operation after two years. I think that I understand what is behind the Government's thinking. If the LEA is prevented from supplying services to grant-maintained schools and if the grant-maintained sector grows, it will be increasingly difficult for the LEA to provide services for its own schools. The necessary economies of scale will not be available and schools will increasingly lack any reason to remain with the LEAs. That is probably the Government's strategy. Like God, the Conservatives move in a mysterious way their wonders to perform. It would be naive to imagine that they intend to leave the growth of the grant-maintained sector to parental choice and that they will not employ other measures in the background to facilitate and hasten their process. They are prepared, in pursuit of an ideological goal, to endanger services and the quality of children's education. It is difficult to imagine anything more irresponsible.

Last night the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), in an eloquent, moving and civilised speech, talked of his anxiety about the question of music provision. The hon. Gentleman was ably supported by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis). In the case of those two hon. Gentlemen the term "honourable" seems appropriate. I should like to talk about music provision in my constituency and, in particular, about trading at the margins of capacity.

In Ceredigion we have a fine school orchestra, whose conductor is the music organiser for Dyfed. The orchestra has enjoyed considerable success on great occasions at the Royal Albert Hall. If, in the new county, which will be called Sir Aberteifi, there is one grant-maintained school, its pupils will presumably be able to join the orchestra. Presumably grant-maintained schools would pay the LEA fees as it would be within the capacity of the LEA to provide for its own schools. In other words, the provision would be within the margin of capacity. However, if more schools were to become grant-maintained, such provision in Ceredigion could be made only beyond the LEA's margin of capacity. Thus, grant-maintained pupils would not be able to take part in the orchestra. I think that my understanding is correct.

What would happen then? Would grant-maintained schools set about starting their own orchestra? It was surprising to hear the Minister talk last night about co-operative ventures. Perhaps the grant-maintained schools could organise a co-operative venture. Thus we would have two orchestras. It might be argued that competition would be created and that that would be a good thing. Competition between the two orchestras would drive down the fees charged for putting on concerts here and there. I am being facetious, of course, but I shall now be serious. Such a situation might very well mean the LEA's own orchestra becoming unviable.

Mr. Forth: I should like to deal with this point now lest it fail to be picked up later. I shall check the situation and provide confirmation, but I am pretty certain that the problem posed by the hon. Gentleman can be resolved under the Local Government Act 1972, which enables such services to be provided across county borders and across boundaries between the LEA and grant-maintained sectors. I made this point in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) in Committee and on the Floor of the House.

Mr. Dafis: If that is true and if it applies to orchestras specifically, it is a comfort. None the less, there remains the argument that at a certain stage grant-maintained schools will be unable to obtain services from the local education authority as that would amount to trading beyond the margin of capacity.

I refer to other services in Wales—in particular, in my part of Wales—that will suffer similarly. I have mentioned those in Committee. The education authority has set up language centres—canolfannau iaith—where children undertake intensive courses in Welsh. After six or eight weeks they return to their own primary schools and receive part of their education through the medium of Welsh. The language centres are run by one or two specialist teachers, who have gained considerable expertise through periods of training. The centres are essential to enable schools to cope with the shifting linguistic circumstances in my part of the world.Families arrive from England and children enter school at various ages. Schools could not cope satisfactorily without such support.

Linked to this provision is the network of area teachers which we call athrawon bro. That service is partly funded by special grants from the Welsh Office which are very much appreciated. Some of the teachers are peripatetic. They visit various primary schools and teach Welsh as a second language, provide language enrichment lessons, and so on. The specialist teachers also train other teachers and develop teaching materials. The loss of such centres and of this network of teachers would have a disastrous effect on the provision that is necessary to deal with the complexities of the bilingual situation in my part of the world and to meet the opportunities.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): It is difficult to follow the logic of the hon. Gentleman's argument. He seems to believe that if something is not provided by the local education authority it should be lost. That is similar to the obsessive and purblind ideological approach of the Labour party. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that many grant-maintained schools are taking part in co-operative exercises? In that way they can purchase services from bodies in the independent trust sector, often in conjunction with local education authorities in cases such as those to which the hon. Gentleman refers. Music and language services can be obtained in that way. The Labour party has talked about how pleased it is to see the Clinton administration in power. Well, that administration has a bible called "Reinventing Government", which describes governments not as providers but as facilitators. The hon. Gentleman is not a member of the Labour party, but he may have learnt from that approach.

Mr. Dafis: I do not question the possibility of having trusts, set up by groups of schools, which could organise alternative provision. However, alternative provision might not emerge.We have a very efficient system already. The scenario put forward by the hon. Gentleman would lead to duplication and would make it more difficult for the local education authority to continue to provide a service to its own schools, as it would have to carry the same overheads with reduced provision. It would certainly create a more difficult and complex situation.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously telling the House that the ethos of Welsh schools will disappear under the grant-maintained system? If he is, he does not seem to have a high regard for the demand for Welsh education and things Welsh in his new county of Sir Aberteifi.

7 pm

Mr. Dafis: That is an extraordinary intervention. Obviously, the hon. Gentleman was not listening to me. I was not talking about Welsh schools: I was talking about special language centres that are set up by local education authorities to service schools which are designated Welsh medium schools and those which are not so designated.

The provision of special language services would be destabilised and made more difficult. There might be duplication and the services might not be available at anything like the present level. I have every faith in the demand for Welsh medium education, but I am concerned about the provision of services and the ability to cope with the varying linguistic situations in west Wales. There is a great danger that the provision of services will suffer as a consequence of the Government's proposals and their refusal to allow local education authorities to continue to sell services to grant-maintained schools.

We have heard more than once about the effect of the Bill on outdoor pursuit centres. I will not pursue that matter in detail—perhaps other hon. Members would like to mention it—but it is a significant element. I should mention in passing that outdoor pursuit centres in Wales that are owned by local education authorities in England provide a not insignificant element of employment in Wales. That is a side issue, but it is worth mentioning. I beg the Government to reconsider the matter.

We are talking about the difference between ideology and pragmatism. The Opposition parties—Labour, Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru—have proposed a pragmatic approach and a pragmatic response. To insist on competition between the public and private sectors to maximise efficiency is perfectly reasonable and shows a confidence in market forces which is rational. To prevent the public sector from competing with the private sector in the provision of services to the public sector and to assume that the private sector will deliver the goods in all circumstances seems to betray a faith in market forces which borders on the mystical. We should not be legislating on the basis of mysticism.

May I examine amendments Nos. 121 and 122 in the context of local government reorganisation in Wales. The amendments would enable local education authorities to sell their services in any part of Wales. They are meaningful only if amendment No. 120 is passed so that we get rid of the prohibition beyond the margin of capacity after two years.

In connection with that, I shall quote from paragraph 46 of the White Paper on local government reorganisation in Wales:

"Authorities must be directly accountable to local people for the services which they secure (by purchase or otherwise). The new unitary authorities will therefore normally be responsible in law for securing the provision of services. But statutory responsibility does not mean that each authority should itself seek to provide every aspect of service, so authorities will need to have a flexible legal framework allowing them both to work much more closely with one another and to purchase services and expertise from each other and from outside agencies—including the private and voluntary sectors."

That is clear enough. It keeps with the purchaser-provider relationship which the Government advocate and there is something to be said for it. If it makes sense for local authorities to be allowed to sell any services to each other, surely it makes sense in education. There is no justification for differentiating between education and other services.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): Would the hon. Gentleman contemplate the concept of the local education authority as a monopoly provider and that what he recommends remains a monopoly? We are trying to break down the monopoly and create competition. Such competition will provide a much greater opportunity for many more people to provide good quality services in exactly the same way as the purchaser-provider relationship in the health service has been broken down from a monopoly into a much broader competitive field.

Mr. Dafis: I am not quarrelling with the concept of the purchaser-provider split. I am saying that, in the White Paper, it is envisaged that one local authority shall be the provider and another local authority shall be the purchaser. It would not be a monopoly situation but one in which the private sector could also offer services so that there was competition between the public and private sectors. There would be a varied pattern of purchasers and providers.

We should not allow an ideology-driven English Government—which is what we have—to mess up the provision and delivery of education services in Wales. Obviously, the smaller size of the new local authorities in Wales will make it more difficult for all of them to deliver the whole range of services. The White Paper opens up the possibility for what are called lead authorities to specialise in various fields and supply services to each other, alongside contributions from the private sector.

The scope for specialisation within the education service is considerable—for example, specialised courses and residential courses, including courses for the learning of Welsh. The demand for such courses will certainly increase, partly as a result of the Government's Welsh Language Bill. One local education authority could make such specialised courses available for purchasing by people working in the education service in other parts of Wales.

Teams of inspectors specialising in specific parts of the curriculum could be working for one local education authority with their services being for sale to schools in other local education authorities and grant-maintained schools. It has been suggested to me that, unless we have a market for those teams of inspectors throughout Wales, it will be difficult to recruit sufficient people to them, especially to carry out inspections through the Welsh medium.

The Minister of State, Welsh Office (Sir Wyn Roberts): The hon. Gentleman knows only too well that we have created the office of an independent inspectorate for Wales which operates on a Wales-wide basis, not on a local education basis.

Mr. Dafis: I am grateful for that intervention. I was talking about the possibility of teams of inspectors being employed by a local education authority and then selling their services to schools in other local education authority

areas. Is that not a possibility? Perhaps I am misunderstanding the matter, but that is what has been suggested by people in the education service in Wales.

Advisory services in specific subjects have been developed by local education authorities in Wales. Those services exist among employees and can be provided to other areas in Wales. It would be tragic if local authorities were prevented from supplying services to schools in other areas. To allow them to do so would be within the spirit of the Secretary of State's White Paper.

Clause 257 would allow a local education authority for two years to sell services only to areas contiguous to it. That would be particularly disadvantageous in Wales, where the Government propose that there will be 21 authorities, because many fewer of them will be contiguous with each other. An English authority on the Welsh border could sell services to schools in Powys, Monmouthshire, Wrexham or Flintshire, but many Welsh authorities could not sell services to those counties even though the syllabus in Wales is significantly different in many subjects from the syllabus in England.

If one looks at the map one can see, for example, that Anglesey could not sell services to Denbighshire, Cardiganshire, could not sell services to West Glamorgan, West Glamorgan could not sell services to Heads of the Valleys and Bridgend could not sell services to Caerphilly because those counties are not contiguous. If they were contiguous they could do so at least for two years. That is nonsense. It frustrates the intentions of the local government White Paper, which would enable general selling of services throughout Wales. We should not allow a Bill intoduced by a Government dominated by English interests and values—I do not think that the Bill would ever have emerged from the Welsh Office—to undermine the Welsh education system. It is possible that it could.

I should be interested to hear the Minister's comments on the position that I have described. I beg the Government to show flexibility and no more on the matter.

Mrs. Angela Knight (Erewash): The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) has mistaken the intention of the clause. We are dealing not with some prohibition but with relaxation. The reference notes which are available to all of us in the Members' Library clarify the point.

At present, local education authorities with grant-maintained schools in their area can sell services to those schools, provided that they are trading at the margin of capacity. The clause allows that procedure to operate more widely under certain circumstances. There is a period of two years in which local education authorities can employ additional staff or incur additional expenditure, if it is necessary because there are no private sector suppliers in those areas. That is the point. The existing procedure is being relaxed. The hon. Gentleman led the House to believe that the clause represented a prohibition.

Mr. Byers: The hon. Lady used the phrase "margin of capacity", which has also been used by the Minister. It is not used in the relevant legislation on local authority goods and services. Will she tell the House where the phrase comes from?

Mrs. Knight: My hon. Friend the Minister answered that question in Committee, and dealt with the point earlier today. Undoubtedly, he will deal with it in more detail in his reply. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Audit Commission has interpreted the legislation as operating in the way that I have described. There is no contradiction on that point.

We must examine what a local authority is there to do. It is not there to provide everything for people in its area. It is there to enable certain necessary services to be delivered. Within that framework, competitive tendering has been widely successful in local authorities across the country for services such as cleaning, rubbish collection and direct labour organisation operations. It is now cascading through into the professional services. That is correct, because competitive tendering has ensured not only that the quality of services has increased for the benefit of local people but that the cost of services has declined.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North implied that grant-maintained schools were desperate to receive services from local authorities and the local authorities were desperate to supply services to grant-maintained schools. I take issue with that. In my area, Derbyshire county council refused to have anything whatever to do with grant-maintained schools So it is relevant to the debate to examine what grant-maintained schools do when they seek the services that they require.

7.15 pm

I refer all hon. Members to the recent report and survey on what grant-maintained schools are doing. They are turning to private firms or employing their own staff to run ancillary services. Local authorities are failing to win contracts especially for cleaning and school meals. The survey was carried out just before Christmas, and covered 229 schools which had either opted out or were in the process of doing so and had made decisions on contracts.

The survey was not carried out by the Department for Education, by the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre or by some Conservative party think tank; it was undertaken on behalf of the Confederation of Health Service Employees, the National and Local Government Officers Association, the National Union of Public Employees and the Transport and General Workers Union.

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Why does the hon. Lady think that contracts which were put out to competitive tender were won by the private sector? Might it not have something to do with the fact that private companies paid half the wages that direct labour organisations paid?

Mrs. Knight: Contracts were won by the private sector because private companies put in better, more competitive bids to provide a good-quality service for the area. If the hon. Gentleman looked at what his constituents wanted rather that what he personally would prefer, he would conclude that any area, any resident and any constituent requires a good quality service at a good quality price.

I return to the telling report. It is noticeable that Opposition Members do not like it. It concludes that only four schools which had opted out asked councils to provide the full range of services. Most had a pick-and-mix approach, but the trend was towards schools running their own services. The trend is for grant-maintained schools to look to others to provide services, not back to the LEA from which they have fled.

Mr. Jamieson: Will the hon. Lady confirm that some grant-maintained schools might be happy to buy into consortium arrangements with local education authorities to buy fuel? She may have seen last week announcements in the press that grant-maintained schools were no longer in local authority arrangements. They have to pay £2,000 more a year for their gas than hitherto. Perhaps she would comment on that.

Mrs. Knight: I have no trouble with consortia. I have no worry about trusts. That is the way in which we should proceed. We should move not from one monopolistic supplier to another but to variety and choice. I would say to schools which have joined together in consortia that they have some clout, and they should use it to obtain the best deal from whichever petrol, oil or gas supplier the hon. Gentleman refers to. That is the way forward, and the way in which we want the service to go.

Local government reorganisation is coming to us all —not merely to Wales—and it will ensure that schools start to think clearly about the services that they require and the way in which they wish to proceed. Rather than merely deciding whether to stay within the local education authority or go grant maintained, they will be able to decide how to ensure that the services that they need can be best provided.

Mr. Jamieson: The hon. Lady missed the point of my intervention. Grant-maintained schools are on their own because they have left the consortia provided by the local education authorities. They have to buy fuel from monopoly private organisations, such as British Gas, which charge them substantially more. The Bill will stop them from being in the consortia provided by the LEAs.

Mrs. Knight: The hon. Gentleman did not listen to my answer. I said that grant-maintained schools should join together into consortia so that they can use their clout as a group of schools to ensure that they get the best price for whatever commodity they need. I undoubtedly urge schools to continue in that direction.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) mentioned consortia, but he was really talking about over-manned, over-staffed, overpaid bureaucracy.

Mrs. Knight: I thank my hon. Friend, who argues clearly, coherently and very well indeed.

Conservative Members want a flourishing grant-maintained sector, with flourishing private-sector suppliers, which will result in the money going into education being spent on pupils, rather than going into the pockets of an over-manned local education authority. That is the way forward.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North misread and misinterpreted the clause. That also happened in Committee, and it is about time that Opposition Members recognised the intention of the clause—better education for children.

Mr. Paul Murphy (Torfaen): I do not believe for one minute that the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North misinterpreted anything, and he has hit the nail on the head when it comes to this clause.

In Committee, we were allowed inadequate time to discuss the clause. This morning I re-read the speech that my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mrs. Campbell) made in Committee on the day that we discussed it, and I pay tribute to her. She highlighted the method in Cambridgeshire, where services have been successfully devolved to grant-maintained schools and to those belonging to the local education authority.

I want to concentrate on the situation in Wales because I understand that the Minister of State, Welsh Office is going to reply to the debate.

Mr. Win Griffiths: If he has time.

Mr. Murphy: I am sure he will. I have only been speaking for the last two and a half minutes, and I shall not continue for too long, as I do not want to miss this important opportunity.

Although the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North referred to the Welsh language, he did not mention the Urdd Gobaith Cymru—the Welsh youth movement—which has written to all Members of Parliament representing Wales to express its concern about the clause and the difficulties that will result from its enactment. Its letter states:

"the threat posed by the Education Act"—

and the clause in particular—

"could inflict permanent damage to the organisation and that without the Urdd being directly involved."

The Urdd says that it operates

"a unique service for the children and young people of Wales",

which could well be jeopardised by the provisions that we are discussing.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North also mentioned the provision of music services in the Principality. The revenue support grant settlement was announced only a few weeks ago. As a result, county after county in Wales has had to reduce music support services for young people. The county music service in South Glamorgan has been operating since 1936—2,500 children in the county are in bands and orchestras and 4,000 receive peripatetic music lessons in schools. The county council has been virtually forced to end the free provision of orchestras, bands and music because of the cuts that the Government have imposed. I believe that the clause will also threaten music services.

Wales is rich in outdoor pursuit centres, and the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North also referred to those. To a large extent, Wales subsidises English local education authorities through such centres. It may be of interest to the House to learn that it is estimated that each of the outdoor pursuit centres in Wales brings in £250,000 per year to the local economy, which adds up to about £10 million and the employment of about 1,000 people in Wales.

Such centres recently asked the Welsh Office about their future, if services provided by the local education authorities are likely to be jeopardised. A Welsh Office spokesman said that the Government would expect such services to be provided by the private sector if they were in demand from schools, and that the relevant clause in the Bill was simply a proposal: it was not yet law, and was subject to change. I sincerely hope that the spokesman was talking sense, and that there will be a change in the measures.

I have received a great wad of letters from schools in Oxfordshire which use the Woodlands centre for outdoor education in Powys. I do not have time to read them all,

but they include letters from parents, head teachers and pupils who have made great use of the services provided by our local education authorities.

For Wales, the most important factor is that the Secretary of State for Wales announced on Monday his plans for local government reorganisation in the Principality. He said:

"I am today publishing a . . . White Paper . . . This follows a consultative process lasting more than two years, and I take this opportunity once again to express my gratitude to the Welsh local authority associations for their wholehearted and constructive participation in that process."—[*Official Report*, 1 March 1993; Vol. 220, c.19.]

Of course he was right, but that does not square with the reported words of the Minister of State when he addressed the Secondary Heads Association in Llandrindod Wells about two weeks ago and made a stinging attack on Welsh local education authorities for a variety of reasons.

Also it does not square with the comments of the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards), who referred a few minutes ago to overweening bureaucracy in Wales. Who are we to believe—the Secretary of State, the Minister of State or the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West? Are local authorities providing good services in Wales or not? The Secretary of State seems to believe that they are not doing a bad job.

In the White Paper, the Secretary of State also said that he wants tremendous flexibility in the provision of services when the new authorities are set up. He said that local authorities are enablers as well as providers, and that they will co-operate with one another, selling one another their services. Where do grant-maintained schools stand in all that? Can they not benefit from the new regime which the Secretary of State proposes for Wales? If there is to be flexibility, and local authorities are to provide services for all 21 unitary authorities in Wales, why can that not be extended to grant-maintained schools?

The Secretary of State also referred to

"specialist residential centres, education/business partnerships and artistic opportunities such as youth orchestras and theatre in schools".

All those will be in jeopardy unless the Government think again about the clause.

Wales will be a poorer place without our orchestras, centres, drama groups and libraries and, most important of all, the services provided by our local education authorities.

7.30 pm

Mr. Congdon: In its original incarnation as clause 244, clause 257 generated much heat and not much light. Fortunately, in many ways the debate in Committee managed to clarify many of the misunderstandings about the clause.

What has intrigued me about the debates, both in Committee and today, is why Opposition Members are so concerned about the clause. I think that all of them, on each occasion that we have discussed the Bill, have said that grant-maintained schools will not flourish and that there will not be an avalanche of them. If they do not flourish and there is no avalanche, the impact of the restrictions on local authorities trading with grant-maintained schools will not bite. In that sense, one could argue that the clause was irrelevant and local authorities could continue to be the monopoly provider. I would not support dropping the clause because, unlike Opposition Members, I believe that grant-maintained schools will flourish and there will be an avalanche of applications from schools wishing to go grant-maintained. We are seeing that already.

The key reason why it is essential to have such a clause is to enable a private sector to flourish—we made no secret of that in Committee. Opposition Members made great play of the fact that there should be a level playing field to allow local authorities to compete. They seemed to suggest that, by some miraculous method, the private sector would win through. So long as there is a monopoly provider, the private sector will not flourish. We saw that clearly when early attempts were made to introduce competition into the provision of other local authority services. It was difficult for firms to set up even to provide refuse collections and cleaning, because we have now seen those services flourish, providing benefits to community charge payers up and down the country.

The clause, as my hon. Friend the Member for Earwash——

Mrs. Angela Knight: Erewash.

Mr. Congdon: I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight)—it was a Freudian slip. As she said, the clause clearly gives local authorities the opportunity, by order of the Secretary of State, to be allowed to trade with grant-maintained schools for a period of two years if that is so designated. That is an important and sensible concession. We want grant-maintained schools to have the opportunity to buy services in a range of sectors, including financial, personnel, training, libraries and music.

Mr. Steinberg: Does the hon. Gentleman not appreciate that a school library service contains literally hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of stock? Is he really expecting the private sector to build up another stock of exactly the same amount of resources? Does he not understand the absolute waste of money and resources in having two providers when one can amply provide for everyone?

Mr. Congdon: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has such a limited imagination as to what could happen if the market for the provision of library services is opened up. Schools will have devolved spending responsibility in a variety of sectors. Grant-maintained schools will have that responsibility in all functions and can choose where they purchase books for their library. There is no problem about that.

Earlier, great play was made of the issue of choice. It was said that grant-maintained schools would, not have the choice of using an LEA service. But they would, provided that the LEA is trading at the margin. In many areas, they will continue to trade at the margin until there is a sizeable number of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Win Griffiths: Define the margin.

Mr. Congdon: It is difficult to define "at the margin". That is not a weakness of the proposals, but a strength. They rightly and properly leave individual local authorities and, crucially, the auditor to judge whether they are operating in accordance with the law of the land. The provisions are not over-prescriptive, which is important.

In reality, if local authorities were allowed to continue to trade indefinitely with grant-maintained schools, the only choice available for grant-maintained schools would

[Mr. Congdon]

be to use the local education authority service. In that scenario, the private sector would not enter the market as there would not be a market for it to use. That is why it is important that such provisions are available.

As my hon. Friend—perhaps I should not try to pronounce the name of her constituency again—the Member for Erewash said, it is important that local authorities are enablers, rather than direct providers of services. If they become enablers, they are given the crucial role of monitoring more carefully and closely the quality of services provided.

There is an irony about the fact that arguments have been voiced about local authorities trading with grant-maintained schools. I believe that it was Derbyshire county council—as we were told in Committee—that refused to provide services or to trade with the grant-maintained schools in its area. Are we witnessing a conversion in the Labour party in that it now recognises that it should trade with grant-maintained schools? It certainly did not in Derbyshire.

It is important that we resist the amendments as they would only perpetuate the position in which there is one monopoly provider. If we value the provision of services to grant-maintained schools and enable them to have real choice and value for money, we must ensure that a free, flourishing and successful market has the opportunity to grow. That is why I oppose the amendments.

Mrs. Anne Campbell (Cambridge): The position is unclear. The hon. Member for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) described that as a strength. I do not see it as a strength and I believe that clarification of what is meant by trading at the margin will eventually lead to some local authorities being involved in expensive court cases. I cannot believe that that is the Minister's intention. Surely it is better to sort the matter out so that we all know where we stand and people do not have to take local authorities to court to obtain a decision as to whether those authorities are trading at the margin.

Mr. Forth: It is much simpler than that. The main responsibility for the determination of trading at the margin will lie jointly with the district auditor and the financial accounting officer of the local authority. I see no need for court cases if local authorities conduct their business responsibly. It should be perfectly straightforward to determine the margin, case by case.

Mrs. Campbell: I am aware that district auditors interpret trading at the margin in different ways in different areas. There is a high degree of confusion, not to say chaos, about the clause.

The Conservative philosophy has been made clear from what Conservative Members have said. As in so many other matters, the philosophy is not about co-operation or working together to create communities—which is what the Labour party believes in—but about creating conflict and competition. That is not the best way to educate our children in the next few years and into the next century.

I want local education authorities, schools, teachers, governors and parents to put their efforts into educating and getting the best out of our children, helping them to flourish and giving them the best possible education. I do not want schools and teachers to spend their time worrying about where their next contract will come from, who is competing with whom and who is producing what—and giving an inferior service at the end of the day.

I am also concerned that a number of schools which have opted out of local authority control were simply not aware that that was the Government's intention. Yesterday I waved at the Minister a booklet entitled "Education for the Next Century". Unfortunately I have left it in my office today. That clearly says that local education authorities will be able to trade with grant-maintained schools for some school services. Many parents will have been misled by that booklet which is available to all parents in libraries throughout the country.

Mr. Steinberg: In a letter to the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), the Under-Secretary of State said:

"It is simply wrong to claim that schools will be deprived of access to local authority support services."

That is not accurate. The Minister is giving wrong information to his hon. Friends and the grant-maintained sector.

Mrs. Campbell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. There has also been a great deal of confusion in my local authority. There have been different interpretations in the local media. People find it difficult to understand that that could possibly be the Government's intention. There is a sense of disbelief about the clause.

There is also confusion among Conservative Members about what library services involve. For the education of Conservative Members, I will clarify what library services in schools are all about. They can be either part of the local education authority or, in some parts of the country, part of the public library service contracted to work for the local education authority. They provide not only book loans but packs to support topic work in the national curriculum; they offer advice and help to schools in the creation and maintenance of their own library and resources centres; they provide in-service training opportunities for teachers and other staff; they also create links between the children's public library service and school libraries.

It is not a question of the library service providing a stock of books that any private organisation can supply —provided, of course, that it has the capital. It is a great deal more than that. It is about experience built up over 50 years in some cases. It is a wonderful example of a shared resource and the way in which the maximum benefit can be obtained from public expenditure.

The school library service offers all schools, but particularly small primary schools, a resource that they could not possibly provide themselves, and it gives them access to a much wider range of resources. There are no external competitors for most elements of that provision. Many reports of Her Majesty's inspectorate have criticised libraries in schools, sometimes because they have too little stock, but that is a reflection of the school's inadequate budget for library acquisitions and not a criticism of the school library service itself. School library services are often praised in HMI reports; on occasion, they are highlighted as the only good thing about a school library. The reports are not praising the stock of books but the services that go with the library service. From comments made yesterday, Conservative Members do not seem to understand what the school library service is all about.

The point that I am making is that school library services are not like cleaning, catering or ground

maintenance services. They offer a great deal more—something that I find impossible to believe could be provided by a private agency coming in from outside.

We have heard a lot today about the support that local education authorities can offer schools in their areas. When we were talking earlier about education associations a great deal was said about the role that a local education authority can play in supporting not only a failing school but a highly successful school as well.

I want to illustrate that with an example. In December 1991 an arson attack on St. Ivo school in St. Ives destroyed the science block with six teaching laboratories and a unique collection of animals built up over many years. Teaching materials, text books, teachers' personal scientific notes, pupils' project work for A-levels, pupils' GCSE work, work books, mark books, assessments, equipment, computers, visual aids, furnishings and fittings were also lost.

7.45 pm

The local education authority was able to mobilise a wide range of practical and specialist help within hours, clearing the ruins, making the area safe, bringing in mobile classrooms, co-ordinating help from other schools, advancing money for replacements required immediately, advising about the loss of pupils' GCSE and A-level work, supporting staff, dealing with insurance claims, and so on. The school was able to keep going and by the beginning of the next term science teaching was back on course.

That was a large school with experienced staff and I have to ask how any grant-maintained school would have coped in similar circumstances without the local education authority's expertise to hand. Make no mistake about it, we are talking about the destruction of the local education authority's support service for something which will be tenuous and difficult to replace. It is just not enough to be insured.

That school is in the Prime Minister's constituency. It has just held a parental ballot and the prospect of leaving the local education authority was overwhelmingly rejected by the parents. I am not at all surprised.

Conservative Members are being naive about the clause. They assume that the private sector will step in and provide a service. It will not be a better service and in many cases there will be no service at all.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Such an example could be echoed and repeated throughout the country and through a range of services. That surely reveals that the Government's prime purpose is clearly to destroy local education authorities. The Government are not concerned with the implications of that for the quality of service that the education authorities provide. We have just heard it said that the purpose of this legislation is to let the private sector flourish—nothing to do with education or the quality of the service. Is that not exactly the divide that we are talking about?

Mrs. Campbell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point—on which I wanted to conclude, so it comes at an opportune moment. The restriction placed on local education authorities to prevent them from trading with grant-maintained schools has nothing to do with raising education standards. It is about encouraging the private sector and perhaps encouraging Conservative party supporters to set up businesses in competition with the local education authority, thus making themselves a great deal of money. I hope that the amendment will be accepted.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am sorry to complain yet again that the Government have been left little time to respond to the debate. I intended to confine my remarks only to the Welsh amendments, which were moved over a period of 25 minutes by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), in the hope that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), would deal with the amendment concerning England with his customary verve and dexterity.

Clause 257 will allow the Secretary of State to make an order enabling a local education authority to sell services beyond the margins of capacity to grant-maintained schools in its own area, or in the area of a neighbouring LEA, for up to two years.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North explained the reasoning behind his amendment, which was prompted by his concern that some LEAs in Wales would not be in a position to provide such services. Government policy is clear—that local authorities should not be trading organisations. I do not think that community charge or council tax payers would approve either. There can be no justification for a different approach in Wales.

Clause 257 recognises the special circumstances which exist in the case of the developing grant-maintained sector. That is why the clause provides temporary relaxation.

In the context of local government reorganisation, we made it perfectly clear that we expect the new, smaller unitary authorities in Wales to adopt a variety of ways of discharging their statutory responsibility to deliver services, including education. Those methods could include joint working and co-operation or, through an authority, arranging for another authority to discharge functions on its behalf.

The Local Government Act 1972 already allows an authority to arrange for another to discharge many of its functions. Clause 258 provides that local authorities will no longer be required to establish education committees. One consequence of that will be to bring education into line with other services and to allow that function, or certain elements of it, to be discharged by another authority—which may employ staff specifically for that purpose—rather than having, as the law currently stands, to go through the process of establishing joint education committees.

In terms of the delivery of service by the new unitary authorities, I do not envisage difficulties. Let us not forget that many of the day-to-day operational responsibilities of managing the education system have already been delegated to schools.

To return to the provision of services to grant-maintained schools by the new unitary authorities, and the relevance of clause 257, at present each LEA in Wales is bounded by at least two other education authorities. In some cases the other authorities may be in England. Under the Local Government (Goods and Services) Act 1970, any LEA can provide services to any grant-maintained school anywhere in Wales and England so long as it does not exceed the margins of capacity.

Clause 257 would allow LEAs to operate for up to two years in their own and in a neighbouring LEA's area

[Sir Wyn Roberts]

beyond the margins of capacity. If any orders were made under clause 257 before local government reorganisation, they would effectively expire with the abolition of the existing LEAs on 31 March 1995.

After reorganisation, each proposed unitary authority in Wales would be bounded by two or more education authorities—except Anglesey. This next point is important. As now, under the 1970 Act, any unitary authority in Wales or LEA in England could provide services to any grant-maintained school anywhere in Wales and England so long as it did so within the margins of capacity. As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools pointed out in an early intervention, clause 257 will come into play only if an authority wants to provide services to grant-maintained schools in its own or a neighbouring authority's area beyond the margins of capacity. Because the unitary authorities in Wales would be entirely new, the fact that there might have been an order under clause 257 relating to the education authority for the same area prior to reorganisation would not be relevant. The unitary authority's power conferred by an order under clause 257 could run for two years from the making of the order.

Even in the case of grant-maintained schools in Anglesey—which, as everybody knows, is very much an island—the picture is not so bleak as some would paint. It would be open to the unitary authorities for the island and for neighbouring Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire to provide services to them beyond the margins of capacity by way of an order under clause 257, but it would also be open to those schools in Anglesey to purchase the services from any education authority in Wales and England if they could be provided by that authority within the margins of capacity.

We are confident that the move to unitary authorities will not adversely affect the provision of services to LEA or grant-maintained schools. The amendments are well meaning, but the special treatment that they seek to give Wales is not necessary and cannot be justified.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North made mention of facilities that are special to Wales, such as language centres and peripatetic teachers of Welsh. I am sure that existing LEAs will be anxious to sell the services of such centres and teachers to grant-maintained schools which need them and that grant-maintained schools, which are obliged to follow the national curriculum—there is no difference between them and LEA-maintained schools in that respect—will be anxious to purchase.

I am sure also that as the grant-maintained sector grows it will want to develop independent sources. That has been the history of development in Wales. A parallel can be found in broadcasting. At one time, there were no independent producers of programmes in Wales, but we provided in legislation for their existence; as a result, they came into being and today they represent a flourishing sector.

Grant-maintained schools will have special purpose grants which cover the development of the national curriculum and associated developments—school management and appraisal, and staff training and development.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the use of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of choirs, orchestras and bands. They can be organised by LEAs under section 145 of that legislation without falling within the ambit of clause 257. I remind the hon. Member for Torfaen (Mr. Murphy) that many youth establishments of the kind to which he referred are privately funded.

We do not see any special circumstances in Wales which warrant treatment different from that given in England. In regard to England, we reaffirm our current position: we are certainly not in the business of enabling local authorities to trade in competition with the private sector which we are certain will develop in the supply of services to the grant-maintained sector.

I repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Torfaen and, indeed, say it to the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North. They represent——

It being Eight o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 246, Noes 274.

Division No. 170] **[8 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David

Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gordon McMaster and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*

Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Questions* on all amendments moved by a member of the Government up to the end of clause 265.

Clause 265

GENERAL INTERPRETATION

Amendment made: No. 147, in clause 265, page 155, line 27, at end insert—

' "alterations", in relation to any school premises, includes improvements, extensions and additions and "alter" shall be read accordingly'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Schedule 16

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 81, in page 204, line 6, at end insert—

'. Section 1(1) (general duty of Secretary of State) is omitted'.

No. 148, in page 204, line 9, at end insert—

'. In section 15 (voluntary schools) for "the maintenance contribution payable by the Minister under this Act", in subsections (2) and (5), there is substituted "grants under section *[Grants by Secretary of State in respect of aided and special agreement schools]* of the Education Act 1993" '.

No. 149, in page 205, line 2 at end insert—

'. Sections 102 and 103 (contributions and grants by Secretary of State to aided and special agreement schools) are omitted'.

No. 150, in page 205, line 3 leave out '(3)'.

No. 151, in page 205, line 4 after 'expenditure', insert—

'(a) in subsection (2)—

(i) in paragraph (c)(i) for "a maintenance contribution" there is substituted "grants under section *[Grants by Secretary of State in respect of aided and special agreement schools]* of the Education Act 1993",

(ii) in paragraph (c)(iii) for the words from "which" to the end there is substituted "being expenses in respect of which grants under section *[Grants by Secretary of State in respect of aided and special agreement schools]* of the Education Act 1993 may be paid",

(iii) paragraph (d) is omitted, and

(iv) in the words following that paragraph, "maintenance contribution" is omitted and for "either of the last two foregoing sections" there is substituted "section *[Grants by Secretary of State in respect of aided and special agreement schools]* of the Education Act 1993", and

(b) in subsection (3)'.—*[Mr. Boswell.]*

Mr. Boswell: I beg to move amendment No. 134, in page 205, line 27, after 'education)' insert—

'( ) in paragraph 2(a) for "and other religious denominations" there is substituted "denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions",

( ) in the proviso to paragraph 2 for "to represent other religious denominations" there is substituted "under sub-paragraph (a) above",

( ) in paragraph 3 before "denomination", in each place, there is inserted "religion,", and'.

Madam: Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With this is will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 127, in page 205, line 27, after 'education', insert—

'( ) in paragraph 2(a) for "and other religious denominations" there is substituted "denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions",

( ) in the proviso to paragraph 2 for "to represent other religious denominations" there is substituted "under sub-paragraph (a) above",

( ) in paragraph 3 before "denomination", in each place, there is inserted "religion, and".'.

No. 180, in page 205, line 27, after 'education', insert—

'( ) In paragraph 2(a) for "appropriately" is substituted "in reasonable proportion".'.

No. 123, in page 213, line 10, at end insert in section 11(4)(a) (Standing Advisory Councils on religious education) for "appropriately" is substituted "in reasonable proportion.".'.

Government amendment No. 136.

No. 36, in page 213, line 10 at end insert—

'. In section 9(7) (parent of boarder at maintained school requesting access to particular worship or religious education) after "particular" there is inserted "religion or".

. In section 11(4)(a) (standing advisory councils on religious education) for "and other religious denominations" there is substituted "denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions" and for "appropriately" there is substituted "proportionately".

. In section 13 (advisory councils: supplementary provisions) in subsections (1), (2) and (7)(b) before "denomination", in each place, there is inserted "religion,".'.

No. 125, in page 213, line 10 at end insert—

'. In section 9(7) (parent of boarder at maintained school requesting access to particular worship or religious education) after "particular", there is inserted "religion or".

. In section 11(4)(a) (standing advisory councils on religious education) for "and other religious denominations" there is substituted "denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions"

. In section 13 (advisory councils: supplementary provisions) in subsections (1), (2) and (7)(b) before "denomination", in each place, there is inserted "religion,".'.

No. 124, in page 217, line 10 at end add—

'132A. In section 9 of the Education (Schools) Act 1992 (Inspection of certain schools), in subsection (6), "education" there is inserted ", except that it may report on the school's compliance with section 6(1) of the Education Reform Act 1988.".

132B. In section 13 of that Act, (Religious education) in subsection (2), after "means", is inserted ", collective worship or".'.

Mr. Boswell: I wish to speak to Government amendments No. 134 and 136. I shall be brief because I know that a number of hon. Members wish to speak on this important topic. I am glad that we at last have the opportunity to debate the Bill's provisions for religious education. It is an essential element of the curriculum, and it is vital that we support the provision of good quality religious education for all children.

The Bill's provisions build on the arrangements set out in the Education Act 1944, which were strengthened in the Education Reform Act 1988. They are designed to bring the law into line with the new world of grant-maintained schools, heralded in last year's White Paper, and with the main thrust of the Bill itself.

The requirements for religious education have three main purposes. First, clauses 10 and 11 provide for appropriate representation on local bodies for grant-maintained schools following the 75 per cent. trigger being reached in a local area. Secondly, clauses 127 to 137 provide for religious education to be provided in different types of grant-maintained school. Thirdly, clause 232 provides for the review of agreed syllabuses where they have not yet been brought into line with the requirements of the 1988 Act, and for a regular review of syllabuses every five years.

Those provisions are sensible. They will provide better religious education for all pupils by ensuring that grant-maintained schools are fully committed to local arrangements and by stimulating curriculum development.

The Bill already incorporates a number of references which expand the various references to "denominations" in education law to include "religions". Specifically, Government amendments Nos. 134 and 136 have a simple purpose—to bring the law into line with practice. Sharp-eyed hon. Members will have noticed an identity between Government amendment No. 134 and my hon. Friend's amendment No. 127 and between Government amendment No. 136 and my hon. Friends' amendment No. 125—a case of great minds thinking alike.

In making these changes, we are responding to representations made to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who is here for this important debate, in particular by the Methodist church, as well as by other respondents to our consultation on the proposals for religious education and collective worship in the White Paper.

8.15 pm

As the amendments are technical I shall explain them briefly. Education law has always referred to religious denominations—I stress the word "denominations"—in describing three matters. The first is the particular character of religious schools and the religious education offered by them. The second is the wishes of parents regarding the education of their children. The third is the membership of religious faith committees on local bodies concerned with religious education. For some time, however, there have been anomalies which do not quite fit the law. For example, there have long been Jewish voluntary schools; references to denominations within that religion have had to be stretched to include religions in order to fit reality. There are also ecumenical Christian schools, which are supported by more than one denomination. Parents may have requested that children be given religious education in accordance with the tenets of a religion which would not recognise the term "denomination", and representatives of such religions have properly been represented on local advisory bodies.

In practice, therefore, the law has been applied as though the word "denomination" included the term "religion". The amendments ensure that there is no confusion and will make it clear that "religion" and "denomination" are both encompassed. It is right that this small change should be made.

Before I allow other hon. Members to speak to their amendments, I wish to make two brief comments. The change is consistent with the sections of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 which deal with similar issues in further and higher education and where the terms that we are proposing are already used. I do not expect any difficulty with the established Church, other faiths or, I hope, hon. Members.

I advise the House that the amendments were originally tabled in slightly different form in Committee. They were not moved, however, because we received representations expressing concern that the position of Christian denominations on standing advisory councils on religious denominations and agreed syllabus conferences might be weakened. I can assure the House that that was never the intention, but the amendments have been redrafted to ensure that there is no possibility of such a misunderstanding. I accordingly commend Government amendments Nos. 134 and 136 to the House.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I welcome the Government amendments which, as the Minister said, are identical to those tabled by my hon. Friends and I. I also welcome the opportunity to debate the important subject of religious education.

We very much welcome what the Government have done for religious education as a whole in the Bill and hope that more progress will be made here or in another place along the lines of amendments Nos. 180 and 123. They seek to determine more precisely the composition of committee A of the standing advisory councils on religious education and agreed syllabuses conferences. Amendment No. 124 refers to the inspection of religious education and the spiritual, moral and cultural development of pupils in schools. I also want to speak briefly about religious education in schools at present.

Although in 1944 religious education was made a statutory obligation for all schools and all local

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

authorities, sadly, in the intervening period—possibly due to the rise of secularism, and social and moral education—it has fallen into a parlous state in our schools.

In 1987 it was estimated that 62 per cent. of year 8 children and 58 per cent. of year 9 children had no religious education whatever. Recently David Pascall, the chairman of the National Curriculum Council, estimated in writing that two thirds of children in our schools receive no religious education whatever. Small wonder that the Association of Christian Teachers said that religious education was safe on the statute book but not safe in schools.

I believe that religious education is crucial for the spiritual and moral development of our children. I refer back to what my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) said when he was Secretary of State for Education in 1988:

"What the vast majority of children have been ultimately starved of are the riches of the spirit. Their ignorance of the historic faith of this country, a faith which has inspired and guided so many of its greatest men and women, is a national disgrace."

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I am sure that my hon. Friend will be happy to know that Lancashire has the highest proportion of church schools anywhere in the country. In my constituency—I do not know about other places—we have outstandingly good assemblies. Whenever I go to a school I always attend assembly. Assemblies are sometimes conducted by the children and sometimes by the headmistress or other members of staff—and they are outstandingly good.

Mr. Coombs: I am delighted to hear that in some parts of the country the same somewhat dismal picture is not apparent—as it is in too many other areas.

The Education Reform Act 1988 had an effect, first, by making SACREs compulsory and, secondly, by leaving control of syllabuses local. Possibly most important of all was the fact that section 8(3) said that agreed syllabuses after September 1989 must

"reflect the fact that the religious traditions of Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of"

other religious traditions.

That advice was subsequently enlarged upon in a letter of advice dated 18 March from the Department of Education to local education authorities, which said:

"The fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian would in most cases be properly reflected by devoting most attention to Christianity".

Section 8(3) was passed by the House on an unwhipped vote by a majority of 274.

If agreed syllabuses are to be appropriate and in line with the law, it seems to me that the way in which they are drawn up must also be in line with the law. I welcome what the Government have done through their amendments to the Bill, but I would like to ensure that, when we talk about Christianity and other denominations and religions, committee A takes cognisance of the appropriate proportion of the religious make-up of the area. That would allow minority religions to be represented, yet appropriate status and appropriate numbers would be afforded to Christian traditions in the area. Too often those committees do not reflect the Christian traditions of an area.

In South Tyneside committee A contained two Muslims and one Roman Catholic, despite the fact that in South Tyneside Roman Catholics outnumbered all other Christian religions put together. In Hounslow there were nine non-Christians on the committee and only four Christians. In Newham there were nine non-Christians and only three Christians. In Oxford and Coventry Christians were outnumbered, despite the fact that in those areas it is plain and obvious that Christianity is the predominant religion of most people.

The same is true for the SACREs. Our amendment would ensure that the representation on committee A of SACREs would reflect the Christian and non-Christian make-up of an area. The National Curriculum Council tells us that one third of local education authorities have more non-Christians than Christians on their SACREs. That does not reflect the religious make-up of those areas.

No fewer than half the committees involved in drawing up the 36 new syllabuses that have been produced since 1989 contained more non-Christians than Christians. Small wonder that the Free Church Federal Council says that the membership of many local education authorities' committees do not represent the make-up of the religious affiliations of the area.

That is why our amendments refer to "reasonable proportion". That is not so specific as to be always sending cases on the exact numbers through the courts, nor to exclude minority religions, but it would at least give Christian religions the kind of predominance which in most, although not all, cases would be required by the religious make-up of the area.

Agreed syllabuses are important and it is important to monitor them and to ensure that they are rigorous. Teachers in individual schools are required by law—under the Education Acts 1944 and 1988—to teach according to the agreed syllabuses. It is therefore very disappointing to hear of a report from the National Curriculum Council described in *The Sunday Times*, but not yet published, although I have asked the chairman of the National Curriculum Council to publish it because it is a matter of great legitimate public interest. The report shows that the law is effectively being broken on the requirements of the 1988 Act vis-à-vis the agreed syllabuses by every new syllabus that has been drawn up by agreed syllabus conferences since 1989.

Indeed, *The Sunday Times* quoted Margaret Morrissey of the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations as saying of the 1988 Act:

"There's always the danger that"

the fact that religious traditions in Britain are in the main Christian and that that should be reflected in the agreed syllabus is

"interpreted so broadly that it's hardly religious education any more".

That is one reason why in too many of our schools religious education has effectively disappeared.

I find it disturbing that the leaked report of which I have had sight says:

"no syllabus could be said to be meeting the full legal requirements for RE as interpreted by Counsel in 1991"—subsequent to the 1980 Act

"The absence of specified content makes it impossible in most cases to discover whether teaching based on the syllabus would give most attention to Christian traditions . . . None specify what proportion of teaching should be based on Christianity".

Too often we find that religious education is not being taught in practice in the classroom, but that is small wonder as the vast majority even of the revised agreed syllabuses, let alone the probably unsatisfactory agreed syllabuses that have not been revised by the other 90 or 100 local education authorities, are illegal because they do not ensure that Christianity is predominant in most areas, as it is the religion of most people in this country.

I should like the Government to do three things to rectify the problem. I hope that they will take my suggestions on board when the Bill goes to the House of Lords. First, it is crucial to have a national monitoring body to ensure that agreed syllabuses are within the law and to insist that the Government take action under their powers in the Education Act 1944 if syllabuses are outside the scope of the law. That could be done quite easily and I urge the Government to do it.

Secondly, although we need locally determined agreed syllabuses, I see no reason why there should not be a national advisory agreed syllabus. At the moment, grant-maintained schools will be able to take an agreed syllabus from any in existence throughout the country. I see no reason why we should not introduce a degree of uniformity on a voluntary basis which would mean that a local education authority, or possibly even an individual school—whether or not it is a grant-maintained school—would be able to adopt instead of its own locally agreed syllabus a national agreed syllabus if that were most appropriate for its needs.

8.30 pm

Finally, I understand that the National Curriculum Council will be issuing guidelines in the near future. We need a limit laid down by law on the number of religions that can be taught within an agreed syllabus to stop the plethora of religions in certain agreed syllabuses producing an exercise in comparative religion rather than religious education.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Is not the crux of the matter that the issue is not taken seriously enough and far too often it is left to a disconsolate art teacher to lead yet another chorus of "Lord of the Dance" to a group of despondent students who know that he does not believe? There is no interest in what he is saying and no communication of the values that he does not espouse anyway. Therefore, there must be a more professional approach and real belief should be at the heart of faith-oriented teaching.

Mr. Coombs: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. Some 51 per cent. of people who teach religious education have no qualifications, whether primary or secondary, to do so. That could be part of the problem and more resources may be needed.

I was going to mention new clause 13, but I am aware that other hon. Members wish to speak. If the Government take up the measure that I have suggested and, most important, take seriously the appalling findings of the National Curriculum Council in that every single authority seems to be flouting the law as laid down in the Education Act 1988, there will be great advantages to religious education to the benefit of the spiritual and moral development of our children.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): May I preface what I hope will be a short speech by once again thanking my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary for the enormously flexible, sensitive and constructive way in which they have listened to representations from those of us with a particular interest in religious education? They have shown sympathy for it and have done everything possible, without any preconceived notions or bureaucratic pressure, to help us forward. We are very much in their debt, as are a large number of people outside the Chamber.

I shall briefly address a fairly narrow point arising on amendment No. 124, which relates to inspections in denominational schools delivering denominational education. I put down a brief marker, because it is possible that my right hon. Friend will see fit to pursue the matter further in another place. It is not entirely satisfactory that schools which supply denominational education, for example, Roman Catholic or Church of England schools, will have two separate obligatory school inspections. One is carried out by the inspector appointed by the denominational schools' own governors directed narrowly and exclusively at the religious education curriculum and its teaching in the classroom under that narrow head. The second inspection is by an outside inspector appointed by Ofsted directed at the school's spiritual and moral development and the provision of the schools' collective worship.

It is bizarre, prima facie, that two separate inspections in more or less watertight compartments should be conducted in the same school. Its rather like having two ticket inspectors travelling on my train to York every week, one to examine whether I have a valid ticket and the other to decide whether I really need to go to York at all. It is unsatisfactory to have two separate inspectors conducting disconnected inspections.

I hope that my right hon. Friend will appreciate how unnatural and artificial it is to separate religious education—the narrow technical teaching of the curriculum subject—under one inspectorate appointed by the governors, from the inspection of the spiritual and moral development of the children and the provision of collective worship under Ofsted inspectors.

I shall illustrate how unnatural it is, because religious education in a denominational school goes far wider than the instruction of the elements of a particular faith. Spiritual and moral development, which is to be inspected by a separate, outside, possibly secular humanist inspector, in the case of a child in a denominational school, will and should encompass a specific commitment to the Christian faith. That is what is involved by definition in a denominational school. A child's moral progress must, by definition, represent moral progress towards the attainment, recognition and approval of Christian moral standards, particularly in the realm of sexual morality.

For example, the religious education in a denominational school, spilling over into spiritual and moral development, may explain to a child that a real Christian commitment means accepting the moral inadmissibility of homosexual acts or pre-marital or extra-marital heterosexual activity. It means subscribing to the sanctity of human life in regard to abortion and euthanasia, for example. That could be part of the teaching in a denominational school.

The second Ofsted inspector, a secular humanist perhaps, appointed from outside the school, may say that that spiritual and moral education is bigoted, dangerously

[Mr. Michael Alison]

narrow, fundamentalist, manipulative, exclusive, intolerant, rigid and biased. One can imagine such a report from a secular inspector concerned with the moral and spiritual education of children which is delivered to children put into a denominational school by their parents with a view to their being taught Christianity and led into a commitment to it. Thus the result could be an inspection that is abrasive, inimical and repudiatory to the spiritual and moral standards being taught in that denominational school.

In conclusion, I turn to collective worship. The Ofsted inspector may be an admirable man or woman, fully in sympathy with the Christian faith, but then again, the individual concerned may not. Only the school governors' appointed inspector can by definition be sympathetic to the Christian faith.

I draw hon. Members' attention to what Monsignor McHugh, the diocesan director of religious education in the diocese of Birmingham, had to say about collective worship:

"The problem with using the yardstick of 'educational value' is that this is not what worship is primarily about. Therefore, using educational criteria to judge the value of worship can only be acceptable to the degree that it is accepted by the inspectorate that this is to use criteria only distantly related to the activity being inspected, even if it is taking place in an educational setting. Worship is not undertaken primarily for educational reasons—we do not celebrate Mass in order to educate ourselves, but to thank God, to listen to his Word and to join ourselves to his sacrificial redemptive offering. We do not pray in order to educate ourselves: we pray because we want to adore and praise God, to thank him, to confess our sins and to ask his help. There can be an educational spin-off to worship, of course, but education is not the primary purpose of worship. And so worship which is educationally poor may nonetheless be good worship; while worship that is educationally rich may be poor quality worship."

To what extent will the Ofsted inspector be able to tread sensitively and properly in the very specialised area of denominational education? My right hon. Friend must consider seriously whether he can at least reach a compromise on the matter by extending the remit of the school inspector appointed by the governors, who is at present limited to the RE dimension, so that his remit runs pari passu with the remit of the Ofsted inspectors so that he or she can cover the other areas that have to be inspected, such as moral, spiritual, ethical and social education, and collective worship.

There would then be two parallel inspectorates going into denominational schools. Parents looking at the different reports would be able to pick the one in which they had most confidence. That compromise is a reasonable way forward. I hope that my right hon. Friend will consider it sympathetically and that he will table amendments in another place to give effect to this proper concern.

Mr. Enright: It is always difficult for politicians to talk about personal beliefs and then to attempt to legislate for them. We are left with many dilemmas, not least because each of us has different beliefs, although we may all be Christians. There are, of course, differing beliefs between the differing religions.

I shall talk mainly about voluntary-aided schools from a Catholic perspective because that is where my experience principally lies, although I taught religion eight periods a day, five days a week for six months in a state school, which gave me some experience in that area.

Voluntary-aided schools are a minefield for religious education. Many starving Irish people emigrated to this country. When they came here, they wished to protect their culture and their religion. The Catholic voluntary-aided schools were built on the pennies and halfpennies of washerwomen, tram drivers and navvies—working-class people who were poor by any standards but who were proud enough to say, "We want our culture, but we also want our culture to be within the community." That proud tradition continues.

This very week, I received a plea from my old school, St. Josephs's Roman Catholic junior and infant school in Pontefract. The school has been given the go-ahead for some new building, and I thank the Department for Education for that. The letter asked for my help in an appeal to cover the school's share of the capital costs so that it could remain independent. When I think of the sacrifices made by my great-grandparents, my grandparents and my parents to keep those voluntary-aided schools going, I am only too happy to give a reasonable amount for the sake of generations to come because I am part of the Catholic community and I am part of the Pontefract community.

8.45 pm

Catholic schools were set up in the community, sometimes in conjunction with the school boards and sometimes ahead of the school boards. All primary education sprang up at a local level because it was important at that level. Tammany hall prefigured much of that. When we had direct elections for school boards locally, people had 10 or 11 votes, depending on how many places there were on the board. As Catholics, we knew our way around that so we gave our 10 or 11 votes to the same person. Catholics regularly came top of the poll, which meant that there was always one Catholic on the board. It is not quite like that with the standing advisory councils on religion these days. There was one powerful Catholic voice.

Out of those school boards arose self-assurance and, importantly, assimilation into society. It was a slow and gradual process, but it was because Catholics were able to have their own voluntary-aided schools that they were able to gain the confidence to enter the local community and local politics. We shall never forget that it was the local communities, which ultimately became the local education authorities, which gave us assistance in doing that. We have a residual loyalty which it is important to remember. The history of people who emigrate is important to them. In this case, that history is certainly cherished.

There we are, secure in our schools and willing to pay the price to remain not completely independent—certainly complying with the community—but having the crucial ability to control what we are doing in our education in moral and religious terms. If we throw that away for grant-maintained status, which is often suggested, we shall throw away an important tradition. That is why Bishop Konstant has urged against schools becoming grant maintained. I do not wish to caricature the issue by implying that if a Catholic school decides to go grant maintained, we in the Catholic community will throw it to

the wolves. We shall certainly not do that. It is our duty, as it is the duty of the Labour party, to look after every child who is being educated.

We are now considering what is meant in terms of religious education and in terms of the moral background of the schools. It is extremely important that we belong to the diocesan family. I use the phrase "diocesan family" deliberately because within the Catholic Church—this is little realised—devolution is important. We talk much about Maastricht and about moving downwards, as it were. Indeed, the word that is used for that is not political but comes from the Vatican, suggesting that deep down in the diocese, in the devolved situation, that responsibility lies.

The family of diocesan schools must cling together. One must support the other, and within the voluntary-aided —the Catholic—system that is crucial. We look on our schools not as the property of the parents who happen to have children attending them at the time, but as part of the whole community—an aspect that is important not only to Catholic schools, but to all state schools.

We are responding to the needs of the Catholic community in specific areas, so we can sacrifice one for the other in that, because there are difficulties in, say, Bradford, we in Pontefract can pay more, or perhaps because they have difficulty recruiting religious teachers in Leeds, we in Hemsworth can provide them with that religious teaching and the training that goes with it. We can follow the same exercise for sacred music and examining the liturgy.

That is important to us, but it is equally important in the Catholic tradition that there should be consultation with other schools. There was a great deal of religious bigotry. Visit Pontefract and see a church that was built at the time when Catholics were still unable to vote. That church was built on a hill behind a peak so that it could not be seen by the good burghers of Pontefract, who might otherwise have stoned it. We have come out of that ghetto situation. It was a deliberate decision which led us out of the ghetto to talk to the local schools, including schools with Anglican origins as well as those with simply state origins. That informal association and co-operation is important. But, above all, we are asserting our Catholic identity in a Christian community.

It is a stated principle passed down by the diocesan education commission that, whatever we do, we must not recruit from abroad or try to steal pupils from other schools. That is important and is clearly laid down. It is also clearly laid down that we must look to the disadvantaged and those with special needs—that we go out into the community to recruit, as it were, those sections of society because we believe that they belong preciously to the overall society that makes up our schools. We wish to give them our values, including our values of religious education, and we say that unashamedly.

Much can be said about the standing advisory committees on religious education. Anyone who contributes to a SACRE or takes part in its deliberations—immediately before I came to this place I was a member of the Wakefield SACRE, so I know something of its workings—appreciates that it is a question not whether one person can outvote another in a SACRE, but of coming together in Christian and religious co-operation.

Although we have only a small Muslim community in Wakefield metropolitan district, it has been important for us to understand that community. It is important from our Christian viewpoint, not because we wish to be tolerant of it—that is a demeaning attitude to take—but because we have a strong desire to understand it. Other religions can enrich us as we can enrich them.

If we are part of a SACRE, we should accept the consequences of the SACRE. In other words, we must accept the agreed syllabus, and there is something wrong about the Bill when it says that a grant-maintained school can enter an agreement with a SACRE but can withdraw from the results of it. It is cynical to say, "I am taking part in these deliberations, but I reserve my right to go elsewhere in the end."

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will the hon. Gentleman explain why SACREs do not approve religious education syllabuses which comply with the Education Act 1988 and which, in the main, should be Christian? Far too many syllabuses are not complying with that, which is why, according to a MORI poll, 44 per cent. of school leavers leave school without a proper understanding of what happened even on Easter day.

Mr. Enright: While I do not necessarily accept the hon. Lady's statistics, I agree that what she says is a fair reflection of the way in which society is operating today. The hon. Lady has in previous debates referred to the case of a mother who wrote to her saying that her 11-year-old child could not recite the Our Father. I would be ashamed if my children could not recite the Our Father, but I claim that the present state of affairs in that respect has nothing to do with the schools but has to do with the family. Religion initially comes from the family, and we look to the schools to enhance the intellectualism of religion.

The hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) said that we must look to the law. I am worried about that because I remember distinctly what Christ said about the scribes and the Pharisees and the law. If we look to the law in that way, we shall kill the spirit of religion.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Not only is ignorance of Christianity widespread, but it is extraordinary that, although a recent opinion poll showed that about half the people in Britain regard themselves as Christian and only about 4 per cent. adhere to other religions, we can have SACREs in which Christians are in a minority. No wonder there is such widespread ignorance and, hence, the amendments that are before the House.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that. I have looked at the syllabuses available from SACREs. It does not matter who is represented on SACREs. What matters is the syllabus that emerges at the end, and I know that there is no such syllabus which affects either the Catholic or the Anglican teaching of religion.

Mr. Boswell: As I shall not be able to reply to the debate, perhaps I may take this opportunity to say that I will reflect seriously on the points made by hon. Members on both sides of the House, particularly in relation to SACREs and the implications of inspection as raised by my right hon. and hon. Friends in their amendments. It will be impossible to discuss them further today, but we shall reflect on them before the Bill proceeds to the other place.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the Minister. It is a shame that, as a result of the guillotine, we could not discuss the matter properly in Committee. That is one of the consequences of the way in which we proceed.

I would also like SACREs to conduct their business in public. That is most important. With my dying gasp, I point out to the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) that the whole of education is seamless. It is impossible to separate history, English, biology and physics from religious education and worship. Among other things, worship is educational: it is through worship that people are brought out in spirit. I believe that passionately, and it is important to state it here.

The three points that the hon. Member——

It being Nine o'clock, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question already proposed from the Chair,* That the amendment be made:—

Question agreed to.

MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *then put the Questions on all remaining amendments moved by a member of the Government.*

Amendments made: No. 152, in page 205, line 34, at end insert—

'The Education Act 1946 (c. 50)

. In the First Schedule to the Education Act 1946 (maintenance of voluntary schools), in paragraph 2, for "section one hundred and three of the principal Act" there is substituted "section *[Grants by Secretary of State in respect of aided and special agreement schools]* of the Education Act 1993'.

No. 153, in page 206, line 31, at end insert—

'The Education Act 1967 (c. 3)

. Section 1 of the Education Act 1967 (extended powers of Secretary of State to make contributions etc.) is omitted'.

No. 135, in page 210, line 28, at end insert—

'The Representation of the People Act 1983 (c. 2)

. In paragraph 22(1)(i) of Schedule 1 to the Representation of the People Act 1983 (use of schools for the purpose of taking a poll) after "authority" there is inserted ", a grant-maintained school".'.

No. 141, in page 210, line 34, leave out '4' and insert '4(1) (a)'.

No. 142, in page 210, line 40, at end insert.

'or (Approval of premises of maintained or grant-maintained special schools)'.

No. 136, in page 213, line 10, at end insert—

'. In section 9(7) (parent of boarder at maintained school requesting access to particular worship or religious education) after "particular" there is inserted "religion or".

. In section 11(4)(a) (standing advisory councils on religious education) for "and other religious denominations" there is substituted "denominations and other religions and denominations of such religions".

. In section 13 (advisory councils: supplementary provisions) in subsections (1), (2) and (7)(b) before "denomination", in each place, there is inserted "religion."'.
—[Mr. Boswell.]

Schedule 18

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 82, in page 221, line 4, column 3, at beginning insert—

'Section 1(1)'.

No. 154, in page 221, line 10, column 3, at end insert—

'Sections 102 and 103.
In section 105(2), paragraph (d) and, in the words following that paragraph, "maintenance contribution".'.

No. 155, in page 221, line 14, at end insert—

'1946 c. 50.	The Education Act 1946.	In Part II of the Second Schedule, the entry relating to section 102 of the Education Act 1944.
1953 c. 33.	The Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1953.	Section 8(1).
1959 c. 60.	The Education Act 1959.	The whole Act.'

No. 156, in page 221, line 15, at end insert—

'1967 c. 3.	The Education Act 1967.	Section 1'.

No. 157, in page 221, line 16, column 3, at end insert

'In Schedule 1, paragraph 4'.

No. 158, in page 221, line 22, at end insert—

'1975 c. 2.	The Education Act 1975	The whole Act'.

No. 159, in page 221, line 49, column 3, at end insert—

'In schedule 1, in paragraph 1(2) "102", paragraph 12, in paragraph 21 "(1) and" and paragraphs 22 and 23'.

No. 160, in page 221, line 52, column 3, at end insert—

'In Schedule 3, paragraphs 4 and 13'.*—[Mr. Boswell.]*

Order for Third Reading read.

9.1 pm

Mr. Patten: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

The House has now debated the Bill for more than 160 hours on the Floor of the House and in Committee. The combination of two days' debate on Report and a two-day Second Reading debate is unprecedented for any education Bill in the history of the House, but it is fully justified. I am sure that whatever else may divide the House, we should agree about that.

The Bill is the longest education Bill ever—now 268 clauses. We made important additions to it in Committee. First, we gave special schools the important new freedom to apply for grant-maintained status. Secondly, by requiring governing bodies to consider grant-maintained status annually, we will ensure that parents are given every opportunity and every reason to make their voice heard on grant-maintained matters.

Mr. Bowis: May I tempt my right hon. Friend to take one more step towards local education authorities which

see the point of the Bill and support grant-maintained schools? Will he give them the right—it is right and proper that he should—to encourage the holding of ballots in schools in their areas?

Mr. Patten: I will certainly reflect carefully on that suggestion. It strikes me as likely that, in the next few years, a number of progressive and forward-looking local authorities will wish to encourage schools in their areas to go grant-maintained. I shall look carefully at the provision of clause 30 and, having reflected, perhaps move to have the matter considered further in the other place.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: My hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis) mentioned ballots. Does not my right hon. Friend agree that the balloting process takes too long, and that there is concern about that?

Mr. Patten: It is right that there should be proper debate about whether a school or a group or a cluster of schools should move towards grant-maintained status. We have already done our best to shorten the ballot period, which seems unnecessarily long. I shall reflect carefully on the interesting suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) that we should make the balloting period as short as is consistent with free and open public debate. Having reflected on that matter, I may well urge my noble Friend Baroness Blatch to reflect on it further in the other place.

Clause 150 will allow local education authorities to continue to make available services relating to special educational needs. I have outlined three of the important additions to the Bill.

A number of amendments have been accepted and, in the past two days, we have discussed a number of amendments tabled by the Government as a result of commitments made by my hon. Friends in Committee. My hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), the Parliamentary Under-Secretaries of State, performed magnificently in Committee. I am about to buy a suitable new tie for my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire to remind him of his service at that stage. I understand that, when successful football matches end, the players sometimes exchange shirts. It may be that, here, ties will be exchanged. *[Interruption.]* I see that there is little demand for the tie that my hon. Friend is wearing, and certainly there is none for the one being worn by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd).

The process has not yet finished. We are considering the responses to the exclusion proposals in the consultation document that was issued last November. It would not be right to amend the Bill further before completion of the consultation process.

I expect that we shall introduce further amendments in another place. These will ensure that we have the right mechanisms to deal with children who have been excluded from school, of whom there are too many. I want to be quite sure that, where children can be educated with their contemporaries in schools, that will happen. On the other hand, I am determined that, where this is not possible—where, for understandable reasons, control cannot be exercised in the classroom by hard-working teachers—proper arrangements will be made to provide pupils with a high-quality education and a measure of control in the community. This will be in the interests of the children themselves, and will help to secure peace and quiet on streets and in communities. I recognise that there is a limit to what any head or classroom teacher can do.

We have listened also to requests that our proposals for groups or clusters of self-governing schools be made more flexible. We plan a number of changes to provide for this. For example, secondary schools will be allowed to become full members of groups, and we shall provide for associations of schools that will be looser than full clusters but will remain formal relationships under a scheme approved by the Secretary of State. I see these moves as important indications of our commitment to flexibility and to making self-governing status a real possibility for all schools, of whatever size, if that is the wish of parents.

The Bill puts in place the structures we need if our vision for education in the 21st century is to be made a reality. That vision is of a school system that will achieve international standards of excellence. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) spoke to the House on the occasion of the Third Reading of the Education Reform Bill 1988, he compared the achievements of our 16-year-olds with the achievements of pupils in the high schools of what was then West Germany in securing certificates in foreign languages, maths and the language of their own country.

At that time, less than 40 per cent. of English 16-year-olds attained qualifications equivalent to those of their West German counterparts. The figure is now 55 per cent. This is a measure of the improvement over the past five years, thanks to the national curriculum and to a regime of regular testing, for which I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley.

We can be confident that we are very much on the right track. Just a few years ago, only four out of 10 of our young people stayed in part-time or full-time education after the age of 16. The proportion is now between six and seven out of 10, and I predict that by 1996—by the time of the next general election—it will have reached eight out of 10. This will help the young people themselves to be happier and more fulfilled human beings, as well as helping the country.

A key element of future success will lie in giving schools the freedom to respond fully to their pupils' needs, to manage their own affairs and to raise their standards. We look forward with increasing confidence to a system of self-governing schools, each offering parents something slightly different within the framework of the national curriculum. We look forward to a system in which each school can play to its strengths, sometimes involving increased specialisation, competing both with other schools and with what it achieved the year before, enjoying the greatest possible autonomy, and accountable to the greatest degree to parents and pupils.

Finally, I want to thank all the hard-working teachers and governors who run the schools in this country for what they do for our children. I repeat my commitment to excellence across the education system. I want every school to realise the full potential of every child which it educates. Nothing less than that will do. Nothing less will guarantee our international economic competitiveness and our national, social and moral cohesion. I commend the Bill to the House.

9.10 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): Hon. Members were not surprised that the Secretary of State was in his usual arrogant, boastful mood this evening. He boasted about the number of hours spent on the Bill. Of course, he was not present during most of those hours, because he was absent from the Committee. He boasted about the size of the Bill, as though he wanted to get into "The Guinness Book of Records" on size, but size is not everything.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said that the Secretary of State's speech was more like a Second Reading speech than a Third Reading speech. Even at this late stage, the Secretary of State is having to confess that there are new problems which he has not thought through, and that amendments will have to be considered in another place. On Second Reading, Labour Members said that this was a bad Bill. In Committee and on Report, the Bill was made even worse, mainly because of the constant interference in terms of giving more powers to the Secretary of State.

Clearly, the Bill's theme has been to concentrate power in education in the hands of the Secretary of State. That is what is wrong with the Bill. It is wrong because it is not what is best for education, and it is wrong in terms of democratic accountability, especially when the Secretary of State takes such pride in not listening to teachers, whom he had the gall to praise a moment ago, and parents, whom he insulted with descriptions such as "neanderthal".

Time and again, the Secretary of State has chosen to grab more power. In many ways, the grabbing of power by the Secretary of State has highlighted some of the weaknesses in his argument and the failure of his policies, especially the precious grant-maintained policy. Grant-maintained schools have not mushroomed in Labour authorities, as the Government predicted. Instead, most grant-maintained schools are in Tory education areas. Clearly, if opting out is a sign of dissatisfaction with local authorities, parents have a higher level of dissatisfaction with Conservative authorities than with Labour ones.

The Secretary of State cannot face the decisions of parents and the fact that more then 24,000 schools are not even considering becoming grant maintained. He has decided to force governing bodies to discuss grant-maintained status each year. That says so much for his trust and respect of governors. He will have power to declare a ballot void if he chooses. That says so much for trusting the judgment of parents.

Clearly, when schools become grant maintained, they will not be opting out of local authority control. They will be opting in to centralised political control under the Secretary of State.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): If the hon. Lady was Secretary of State for Education and wanted to close grammar schools in my constituency of Dartford, and if the people of Dartford voted in a referendum not to have those schools closed, what would she do? Would she keep them open or close them?

Mrs. Taylor: The idea that we are now to have a referendum in Dartford is a new one. I would be happy, if I were Secretary of State for Education—I am glad that the hon. Gentleman anticipates that—to seek to improve the opportunities for every child in Britain. I would not segregate children into successes and failures. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that issue. In Committee, one of the few occasions on which Tory Back-Bench Members spoke was when selection was discussed. That is their hidden agenda. They do not want to talk about it, but selection is one of the objectives of the Bill.

The Secretary of State has often said that he is proud of the Bill, and that he will be a tough Secretary of State. But we cannot trust him with the powers in the Bill, not least because he is inconsistent in using his powers. He has said many times, and he repeated recently, that he intends to be tough on surplus places. He takes great pride in saying that he will be tough. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) obviously approves of that.

The Secretary of State has also said, boldly and directly, that he will not allow schools to opt out to avoid closure; yet, within the past few days, he has allowed Shire Oak community school in Walsall to become grants maintained. It was due to close, as a result of rationalisation of surplus places: it is operating at 51 per cent. capacity. The Secretary of State has allowed that school to opt out. So much for his statement to the House:

> "I will not allow grant-maintained status to be used as a bolthole for failing schools".—[*Official Report*, 9 November 1992; Vol. 213, c. 651.]

That is the Secretary of State's rhetoric, but we see the decisions he makes.

Of course we must object to the use of the guillotine on the Bill. Crucial amendments have not been discussed, such as the amendment——

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Taylor: There is no time, I am sorry. *[Interruption.]* I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that, because of the guillotine, there is not time to give way as much as I would normally do. I hope that he will listen to the point that I am about to make, because I am sure that he will be interested in it. I hope that Ministers will listen too.

I wish to give an example of the serious and important amendments which should have been discussed during the passage of the Bill and have been ignored as a result of what has happened. *[Interruption.]* If the Minister will control his Parliamentary Private Secretary, we might have a debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not know that the discipline in this class is as good as it might be.

Mrs. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure that you will have noticed where that indiscipline was coming from.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order on Third Reading for the hon. Lady to discuss an amendment which was not called?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is usual to talk about what is in the Bill, rather than what is not.

Mrs. Taylor: I am sure that that is the case, but it is rather strange that the Secretary of State had to announce that he would consider so many new issues at a later stage.

One of the amendments that Madam Speaker selected, but on which discussion was not allowed, was suggested to me by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty

to Children. It related to the responsibilities of grant-maintained schools and their failure to allow, in one case, a teacher to go to court to give evidence in a child abuse case because the school said that it could not afford to provide cover. Grant-maintained schools are not under the same obligation as local authority schools to release teachers in such circumstances, which is the sort of anomaly and serious problem that we should have been discussing.

The Secretary of State has shown us his priorities. Even as amended, the Bill does nothing to tackle the real education issues that face us: underfunding, which has caused schools in Tory-controlled Enfield to say that they cannot guarantee full-time education for all pupils next year; the cuts, which are challenging the very existence of nursery education in many areas; and the Government's total lack of commitment to nursery education.

The Bill does nothing to help those parents who are bewildered by the constant chopping and changing in the curriculum, the teachers who have had to administer discredited tests, or the governors who have to hold jumble sales to buy books.

The Bill does not deal with the important problem of class sizes—no doubt because the junior Minister said yesterday that he does not think that they are important. The Government's obsession with grant-maintained status and the market comes before everything else. This is a bad Bill, which will damage our children's educational opportunities and concentrate too much power in the hands of the Secretary of State and Opposition Members will oppose it.

9.21 pm

Mr. George Walden: May I resume the speech that I began yesterday, Madam Deputy Speaker? The *Official Report* states:

"**Mr. George Walden** (Buckingham): I welcome the new clause as I welcome the Bill. Far from doing what the hon. Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers)"—

I am glad to see him in his place—

"and other members of the Opposition parties have alleged, the new clause will introduce a more equitable distribution of powers between the Government and the councils——

It being Six o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Order [15 December] and Resolution this day, put the Question*".—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 179.]

New clause 22 is obviously the most important clause in the Bill and it will bring about a more equitable distribution of power between the Government, councils and schools. Everyone failed to realise that, as Lenin once said, it was a case of

"all power to the soviets"—

soviets meaning the councils. Previously all power resided in the councils. The Department of Education and Science had minimal powers. Anyone who contests that should look closely at its shoddy, substandard 1960s building, which mirrors the shoddy, substandard educational standards that have reigned in Britain since that time. The building contained only a small number of officials because all the power resided with the councils and none in London or with the schools.

Dr. Wright: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Walden: I shall certainly do so when I have finished this point.

Clause 22 redistributes power equitably, more towards the centre, and is the most important provision in the Bill. Why should more power go to the centre? Because that is necessary to control devolution of power to the schools, leaving some powers in the middle, with the councils. From that point of view, the Bill seems fair and equitable.

Dr. Wright: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Hon. Members: No.

Mr. Walden: I am being urged by my hon. Friends not to give way. I had better not as I have a lot to get through.

Unfortunately, I have to criticise my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, as there is a major contradiction in the clause that I have just lauded.

Clause 22 states that the Secretary of State will encourage

"diversity and increasing opportunities for choice."

Given the present climate in Britain, that is nonsense. Some 86 per cent. of our schools are comprehensive. Therefore, the realistic choice and diversity—even with grant-maintained schools—for normal parents will be either to send their children to a comprehensive school, with all that that means in terms of the philosophy of education, or to pay for them to get out of the system, which I do. I do not agree with the philosophy governing comprehensive education in this country. But those of us who can afford to opt out of the system are few and far between for financial reasons.

Therefore, there is a major contradiction as—*[Interruption.]* I am about to make my argument; hon. Members must wait. In reality, the choice is between a public school, which with its expensive fees is totally inaccessible to most people in this country, and the dogma of comprehensive education. Therefore—here is my argument—I should like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to amalgamate the perfectly reasonable powers in new clause 22 with another part of the Bill dealing with the technology schools initiative and introduce in this country, where possible, a diversity of types of school to give us a more continental and far more successful system with genuine choice and excellence. It would include selection by aptitude, of which they are not afraid on the continent.

If one is born to a low-income family on the continent, one has a damn sight more opportunity to get on in society than we do in our class-obsessed country, which has given rise to the comprehensive system, the whole ethos of which is to keep down standards for everyone.

Hon. Members: Nonsense.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is reaching a point where I cannot hear the words of the hon. Member who has the Floor—[HON. MEMBERS: "He is speaking rubbish."] That may be a matter of opinion, but the tradition of the House is that hon. Members allow others to speak even when they disagree with them—a tradition that I intend to maintain. Hon. Members who indulge in too many sedentary interventions may find it difficult to catch my eye when they wish to speak formally.

Mr. Walden: I should be horrified if you, Madam Deputy Speaker, missed anything that I had to say as I believe it to be true.

Comprehensives have failed—*[Interruption.]* I quote Professor A. H. Halsey, from last week, not yesterday. The professor wobbles around like a Russian doll and scares the hell out of the Opposition when he does. But he never

[Mr. Walden]

quite falls over and assures us that he is an ethical socialist. What is so ethical about condemning generations of people from low-income families in this country to low expectations in education, which is what Professor Halsey and Opposition Members have done? I know what I am talking about as I went through the state system—and when I was not in a comfortable financial position.

I am keen that we should raise the sights of people in this country so that they come closer to approaching the ambitions of those on the continent, where I have personal experience. At present, under the comprehensive system we have a system of institutionalised mediocrity. When we talk about the state of our young, and the state of law and order, Opposition Members, including the Labour Front Bench home affairs spokesman, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), should consider whether comprehensive schools, with their lax academic and disciplinary expectations, have done anything to contribute to law and order. Let us have an honest debate on the subject, not merely a tactical one.

My practical message for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is that, when he is considering applications for grant-maintained schools, he should encourage applications under the technology schools initiative to produce a genuine diversity of types of schools for people, particularly from low-income families, in the cities, so that those children have the same effective choice that well-to-do children have.

I do not believe that, because people live in inner cities, they should not learn, say, the classics. I do not believe that that should be the effective preserve, as it is at the moment, of people with money who can afford to go to private schools, which is the reality. They should have the option of going to an acadmically demanding grammar-type school based on aptitude.

There should also be, as on the continent—the more advanced and more enligthened continent—high-grade technology schools,, expensively well equipped, my right hon. Friend must note, for children whose aptitudes lie in another direction. Those children deserve the effective choice that people who happen to be born to more well-to-do families in effect have.

That brings me to the second point, which has been extremely well covered by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). I do not understand, and have never understood, the Government's attitude to nursery education. The social reality is that people such as myself who are not rich but have a bit of money buy nursery education for our children. We do that for two reasons. First, it gives them a head start. We do not need studies to know that. We know that that is true. Secondly, it gives my wife, not to speak of myself, a little more free time than we might otherwise have.

So let us not have studies about nursery education. Let us get on with nursery education for everyone, not just for people with money. Besides being obviously educationally beneficial, besides being useful for wives—most of them —who deserve more free time, nursery education, as common, ordinary, sensible people know, helps to get the children early, at the age of two or three, so that they stand a much greater chance of not ending up in the juvenile court.

Under the nursery regime, which does not mirror the mistaken permissiveness of the 1960s but is a serious, organised educational regime, in which something is expected of the child in terms of social behaviour and in terms of beginning to know how to learn, even at the age of three, not only will society be helped but the present abysmally low expectations in primary schools in this self-congratulatory country of ours will be boosted, as they will be in the secondary schools.

One day we may even get ourselves to the level where we can safely expand our A-levels in the way that they should be expanded without diluting them across the board in the way in which the education industry would like to do today.

For all the reasons, I recommend to the Government that, irrespective of party political points of view, nursery education has become a socially as well as an educationally vital issue in Britain. If Liverpool does not demonstrate that, I do not know what it does demonstrate.

Finally, you will be glad to hear, Madam Speaker, it would be irresponsible for any hon. Member to make the sort of intervention that I have made with all its cost implications without saying from where the money will come. I have told my right hon. Friend that to have genuine diversity of schools he will have to spend a lot more on the technology colleges. They must be well equipped. They must be centres of hope in the deprived areas of the country.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): All schools should be.

Mr. Walden: Agreed. They must look good. They have to recruit highly qualified, difficult-to-get teachers in physics, maths and the fairly rare and highly skilled technologies. All that costs money. Nursery schools cost money. I have been given a figure of £1 billion and it will probably turn out to be more. We do not have that money because we are £50 billion in debt, so we must get it from the public.

I hope that Labour Members will listen carefully, because wisely—I commend the Leader of the Opposition for this—Labour has established a commission to examine universal benefits. I can identify one universal benefit from which billions of pounds could be saved, although some of my right hon. and hon. Friends might not like it. I have gone on for many years about mortgage tax relief and I seem to be getting somewhere with that argument, but let us look now at child benefit, which is indiscriminately flashed around the middle classes. The women, they tell me, like to get it——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is straying far from the purpose of the Third Reading debate, which is to discuss the contents of the Bill. Benefits are not among them.

Mr. Walden: I am sure that you, Madam Speaker, agree that it would be remiss and irresponsible of me to talk about the technology schools initiative and nursery education, which are in the Bill, and to make recommendations involving Government expenditure, without briefly explaining where that money is to come from——

Madam Speaker: Order. It would be irresponsible of the hon. Gentleman if he did not allow other right hon. and hon. Members to participate in the debate.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Walden: For that reason if no other, Madam Speaker—because I see that I am causing a little consternation among Opposition Members—I will sit down, having said that the major changes that I recommended should be explained to the country frankly. It should be explained that they will cost money and that that money should come from curtailing the universal handout of child benefit to the middle classes—to the middle-income groups. It should be explained that the money will be returned to education, because there can be no better benefit to all our children—particularly deprived children—than spending money on education.

9.32 pm

Dr. Wright: Unlike the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), I shall be brief.

Ever since the White Paper that led to the Bill first appeared, I have been searching for its meaning. What did it mean? What does it mean to make legislation in this way? What does it mean to offer consultation, yet not to consult? What does it mean to drive through proposals without consultation? What does it mean to ask for advice but not to take it? What does it mean to deny a level playing field when people ask for one?

What does it mean when people who express proper concerns about the education service—as people in Staffordshire have done in respect of the music service, which other hon. Members mentioned, and many other services—are simply turned away with mutterings about "producers' interests"?

What is meant by some or all the most surreal moments we have experienced? In yesterday's debate, we were told of a retired headmaster in Chelmsford who was supposed to have committed the most heinous crime of distributing leaflets giving his views about an opt-out proposal.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Clearly the hon. Gentleman has not seen the leaflet and does not understand the situation in Chelmsford, and I am sure that he would not want to mislead the House. The reasons that teachers at the school in question were so outraged was that the leaflet was patently untrue and dishonest in the way that it tried to con parents into believing something.

Dr. Wright: The hon. Gentleman has made my point for me: he did not like the arguments in that leaflet. This is an important point: it tells us a good deal about the kind of government, the kind of legislation and the kind of politics that have been created. Yesterday, the hon. Gentleman described that retired headmaser as disgusting; the Minister said that the arguments were intimidating. In a free society, a retired headmaster was described as disgusting and intimidating because he had had the temerity to distribute some leaflets. He did that because he felt that there was a threat to the education service to which he had devoted his life. That is the kind of response that we get from this Government.

Anyway, there I was, searching for the meaning of the Bill sensing that it had something to do with the Government's ideological mission, and then discovering that the Government's determination to destroy local education authorities was given far more priority than any interest in what was happening to the service that those authorities were delivering. That has become abundantly clear as we have asked questions about specific aspects of the Bill, and have received no answer except "Somehow, the market will provide". We are talking about libraries, orchestras, and all the other services that affect the quality of life. We are told that that does not matter; somehow, the market will provide.

There I was, searching for the meaning of the Bill. Eventually, I found it—courtesy, as it happens, of the hon. Member for Buckingham: the outcome could not have been more fortuitous. It so happens that the hon. Gentleman followed the maiden speech that I made some months ago, and advised me to read a book—*[Laughter.]* He obviously felt that I needed to read a book. The book in question was by Ferdinand Mount; many Conservative Members, if not Opposition Members, will know that Ferdinand Mount used to be the director of the Centre for Policy Studies, the great Thatcherite think tank. He was also editor of *The Spectator*, and adviser to the departed leader.

I read that book and it answered the question that I was asking—"What is this legislation about?" Ferdinand Mount had come across a lecture given by the Secretary of State to the Conservative Political Centre a year or so ago; he felt that that lecture was the epitome of the current trend of thought. I cannot resist sharing his views with the House. We have heard a good deal about——

Madam Speaker: Order. I remind the House that, on Third Reading, hon. Members must debate precisely what is contained in the Bill—not what might be in the Bill; not what is not in the Bill; but what is now in the Bill, as amended, if it has been amended. We must be precise about that; otherwise I shall have to draw the facts to the attention of all hon. Members again, and I do not want to waste any more time.

Dr. Wright: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My reason for sharing Ferdinand Mount's views with the House is that I think that I have discovered the kernel—the crystal—of the Bill, and I think that I can express it in a sentence. I am sure that it would be helpful if I did so; it would be a shame to deny the House the meaning of the Bill, as interpreted by Ferdinand Mount. He says:

"the sad truth is that the terms in which Mr. Patten proceeds to discuss our political culture do not suggest that it has endowed him with that understanding of the British Constitution which would have come as second nature to a highly intelligent youngish politician of an earlier generation . . . 'All power to Parliament' is thus Mr. Patten's cry, faintly but unnervingly reminiscent of Lenin's 'All power to the soviets'—and not without the same fraudulence, since both slogans mean in effect 'All power to the government or governing party'. What seems alien to both Lenin and Mr. Patten is the idea of *dispersal* of power to a variety of institutions—whether parallel, independent or subordinate."

You now see, Madam Speaker, why I wanted to share that with the House. Suddenly, all was clear. The essential meaning of the Bill is distilled in that quotation. It uses the language of choice but in reality it is about rigid centralism. That is what it is about and that is what it will be remembered for. It claims to be about education but it is about something quite different. The tragedy is that another Government will one day have to pick up its consequences.

Madam Speaker: I call Mr. Faber.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): I thank the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood for giving way to me.

Madam Speaker: Order. I need to be clear: has the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright) completed his speech or given way?

Dr. Wright: I have both finished and given way.

Madam Speaker: In that case, I am now in charge. I call Mr. Faber.

9.46 pm

Mr. David Faber (Westbury): I shall not follow the ranting of the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright), which would have been more appropriate for the Balliol junior common room than for the House.

In Committee and during the past two days, we have heard many claims by the Opposition that the Bill will somehow destroy local democracy and that it is centralising legislation. To those of us fortunate enough to have grant-maintained schools in our constituencies and to know them well, that seems an incredible suggestion as we see true local democracy at work for ourselves.

The truth is that the grant-maintained system in general and the Bill in particular helps to enhance local democracy, not destroy it. Throughout our reform process, we have sought to devolve powers to the very lowest level. Governing bodies are directly accountable to parents and to the local communities which they serve. They feel more involved and believe that the decisions they are taking matter.

The proof is that large numbers of parents are coming forward to serve as governors and are turning out in greater numbers than ever before in ballots. The average is about 60 per cent., well above that in local county council elections. We heard the latest figures for grant-maintained schools from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at Question Time yesterday. I shall not repeat them now.

There has been much debate in Committee and during the past couple of days on the reasons why schools opt for grant-maintained status. The Opposition spoke of bribes, but were ably answered yesterday, as always, by my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), who said that if freedom is a bribe, bribes are indeed available. What is on offer is freedom from local education authorities, the freedom to decide the course of one's own school and the freedom as to how one's money should be spent. We are well aware of the benefits—increased pupil numbers, the freedom and ability to employ more teachers, and to improve pupil-teacher ratios, new curriculum subjects and, as I have been able to see at first hand, greater resources available for and, more important, given to special educational needs.

Above all, grant-maintained status plays a crucial role in maintaining the impetus to improve standards. GCSE grades in these schools have improved above the national average and parents are now voting to send their children there to get the best possible education for them.

In Wiltshire we are fortunate not to suffer the worst excesses of intimidation and misinformation put about in so many LEAs by opponents of grant-maintained status. However, even there, we still suffer ill-informed and inaccurate public lobbying against grant-maintained status, usually by local politicians for dogmatic rather than well-thought-out reasons and sadly, all too often, at some distance from the local school and community to which they refer. They also usually fly in the face of the recommendations of governors and head teachers.

I warmly welcome the Bill's measures to tackle any form of intimidation or misinformation, at the ballot stage and subsequently, and I also welcome the further measures announced today by my right hon. Friend.

Conservative Members sat and marvelled in Committee at the repetitive flow of socialist dogma and educationist theory that we had to put up with. We should not be surprised. After the Labour party's fourth consecutive election defeat last year, there was a brief reforming ray of light. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) issued a press release on 10 June saying:

"some LEAs may wish to consider local referenda among all parents to test opinion on key issues".

That sounds to me like parental ballots on opting out. The hon. Gentleman continued:

"parents and governors may feel bound to make decisions about what they think is best for their school. Labour must not appear to be placed in a hostile position of opposition to such parents."

Sadly, the shutters came down all too quickly. The Labour party is again committed to abolishing grant-maintained schools and putting them back into local education authority control. At the Labour party conference last year, the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said:

"We oppose opt-out in principle because it is wrong. It is wrong in principle for a group of parents to be able to hijack a school".

I wonder what the parents of the 236,000 children now at grant-maintained schools—the number rises daily—will feel about that. I wonder what they think of being accused of hijacking their own children's education and seeking to improve it.

I can do no better than remind the House of the words of the former leader of the Labour group on Wiltshire county council, who last year dramatically resigned from the Labour party and crossed to the Conservatives. Speaking of Labour policy on education among other subjects, he said:

"The Labour Party is today, at national and local level, in a state of total confusion, quite unable to put forward ideas to meet the problems of the modern world. Many of the rank and file still cling to ideas that are twenty to thirty years out of date and show little imagination in their simple, doctrinaire slogans of political frustration."

It is this Conservative Government who are making the radical changes needed to raise standards and safeguard our children's education for the future.

9.52 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths: I was amazed at the speech of the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), who showed a breathtaking disregard of history and of the fact that a Tory Government have been in power for the past 14 years—a Tory Government in which he played a small part. Then I discovered the reason for the hon. Gentleman's disregard of history. He had the benefit of an education at Moscow university at the height of the Stalinist comeback after Kruschev's fall. All was revealed by that knowledge.

Mr. Walden: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Griffiths: I am sorry; I have been advised that I have not enough time—and, on reflection, I have not.

Mr. Walden *rose*——

Mr. Griffiths: If I could carry on——

Mr. Walden *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Does the hon. Member for Buckingham have a point of order?

Mr. Walden: Yes, Madam Speaker. It is personally hurtful to me to be accused, albeit tangentially, of being in any way influenced by Stalin. The hon. Member for Bridgend should have known that Stalin died in 1953. I was a British Council postgraduate student at Moscow university in the time of Kruschev. The hon. Gentleman's history is deficient.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Buckingham, who has clearly had a good education, should know very well that that is not a point of order for me and he should not waste the time of the House.

Mr. Griffiths: The hon. Member for Buckingham talked about genuine quality and his fears about standards. Over the past 14 years we have had an increase in illiteracy for the first time and at the beginning of the 1990s reading standards in primary schools declined for the first time since records began. If there is any fault, it must be in the past 14 years of Conservative Government. As for poorly equipped schools, parents are having to dip into their pockets to make up for Government underfunding.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman on one point. The Conservative party has been absolutely misguided in jettisoning the commitment in 1972 of the former Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, to provide places for all three and four-year-olds in nursery education within 10 years. The Home Secretary, when he was Secretary of State for Education, jettisoned that target and the money resolution in the Bill has prevented us from discussing nursery education.

In conclusion, the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Faber) talked about the abolition of grant-maintained schools. We do not intend to abolish the schools. We intend to abolish the undemocratic, unaccountable funding council and allow the schools to manage themselves in the same way as any good LEA schools and to look again at the funding formula so that all schools are decently treated.

9.55 pm

Mr. Forth: We have just heard quite the quickest U-turn in policy that we have ever witnessed. Only yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State predicted that the Labour party would have to accept the concept of grant-maintained schools and within 24 hours it has done so. It is a remarkable tribute to the powers of persuasion of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) for that startling revelation.

Mr. Griffiths: Let me point out that I said that we would not be abolishing the schools, but the funding council, to allow the schools to be managed in the same way as any good local authority school, and to review the funding formula so that it is fair.

Mr. Forth: On reflection, that may be a double U-turn —the quickest one we have ever heard in the House.

Let there be no mistake; this is a far-reaching Bill. It is deliberately so and marks among other things the end of the long-standing local education authority monopoly of state school provision—something which all Conservative Members and an increasing number of parents will welcome.

The Bill is also a continuity of the policies that we have pursued throughout the 1980s and into this decade. It is a continuity of policy on special educational needs, on choice and on diversity of schools, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) spoke so eloquently a few moments ago.

Ever since we published our White Paper last year, all that we have heard throughout the stages of the Bill is dreary criticism from the producer interests driving Opposition Members into the usual litany of complaint and negativism about everything that we have done to improve standards of education—something to which we are dedicated and to which Opposition Members seem constantly to be blind in everything they say and do.

Opposition Members accuse us of centralisation, yet we wish to give real powers of decision in making priorities and spending money to parents, governors and teachers and not to the bureaucracy of the local education authorities which call the tune to which Opposition Members dance whenever they are asked or told. The Opposition's position is no more or less than special pleading of the worst possible kind and we reject it out of hand.

The Bill provides a framework for the growing grant-maintained school sector, a new deal for pupils with special educational needs and a new body to deal with the curriculum, assessment and testing—something which is of key importance and at the heart of excellence in education to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State are dedicated.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Would it be possible for the Minister to face this side of the House or the Chair as many Opposition Members cannot hear a word he is saying? He is talking only to his hon. Friends.

Madam Speaker: I always prefer to see the handsome profile of a Member rather than his bald patch.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful for your guidance and advice, Madam Speaker. Perhaps you could give me some tonsorial advice later after we have completed our considerations.

The Bill is of crucial importance to the future of education. It contains all the elements that I have described to the House. I commend it to the House because I believe that it will provide a high quality of education for all our children.

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:—

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 252.

Division No. 171] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Bates, Michael
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Batiste, Spencer
Aitken, Jonathan	Bellingham, Henry
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Bendall, Vivian
Amess, David	Beresford, Sir Paul
Ancram, Michael	Biffen, Rt Hon John
Arbuthnot, James	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Body, Sir Richard
Aspinwall, Jack	Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Booth, Hartley
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Boswell, Tim
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Bowden, Andrew
Baldry, Tony	Bowis, John

Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam

Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'll)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Community Care

10.13 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tim Yeo): I beg to move,

That the Special Grant Report (No. 7) (House of Commons Paper No. 504), which was laid before this House on 22nd February, be approved.

Special Grant Report (No. 7) follows Special Grant Report (No. 6), approved by the House on 11 February. This completes the distribution of grants to local authorities for the financial year commencing on 1 April for expenditure on community care services as defined by section 46 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

I am always happy to debate the subject of community care, whatever the hour, but I very much regret the circumstances of this debate, which has been necessitated by a costly and ill-advised legal action, the effect of which has been only to cause delay for local authorities in setting their budgets and to create an unnecessary atmosphere of uncertainty.

This report confirms our commitment to the provision of adequate—indeed, generous—funding for our community care reforms. Not only have we transferred from the Department of Social Security to the local authorities the full £399 million that would have been spent if the policy had remained unchanged; we have added £140 million. That represents 35 per cent. on top of the existing expenditure to allow local authorities to develop their services. Then there is another £26 million relating to the arrangements for the successor to the independent living fund. The whole sum—£565 million—is now to be ring-fenced so that the local authorities can spend it only on community care services. Of course, local authorities will have complete discretion to meet the needs of the local community as they see them and to reflect their priorities. They will be able, for instance, to take account of the importance of providing services for people with drug and alcohol problems.

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): It is good to hear of the global sum that my hon. Friend has announced and the release of the £20 million that was unfortunately held up by the legal processes. My hon. Friend will know that many of us have received letters from organisations, such as Turning Point and the Cranston projects, which deal with drug and alcohol problems. These letters express concern that, now that this money has been released, the allocation is perhaps weighted towards rural areas—as opposed to the inner cities where it is believed that many of the drug and alcohol problems are to be found. Can my hon. Friend reassure us that this is the fairest means of distribution?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend is one of the most vigorous advocates for the people of Battersea and Wandsworth. There is no issue affecting his constituency which is not promoted most energetically in this House and, behind the scenes, with Ministers. I can give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks in that 50 per cent. of the special grant is being distributed in accordance with the existing pattern of service providers. Of the transfer element of the grant, 50 per cent. is distributed in accordance with the standard spending assessment; the other half reflects where the existing treatment and other residential centres for elderly or disabled people are located. We have indeed taken into account the concern that my hon. Friend has expressed.

The original suggestion—that the money for residential treatment of drug and alcohol abusers should itself be the subject of a ring-fence—was made at a time when the concept of a ring-fence for the totality of community care funding was not even contemplated. Now that we have this total of £565 million guaranteed for expenditure on community care services, it would be quite wrong if, within the total, we were to impose a sub-ring fence for the £20 million——

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): Why?

Mr. Yeo: If the hon. Gentleman will contain himself for a moment, I shall explain. For a three-fold reason it would be wrong to provide a sub-ring-fence. First, that would completely destroy one of the fundamental principles on which the whole community care policy is based—the principle of individual assessment. We are not willing to undermine that principle. Why should an elderly or disabled person be entitled to an individual assessment before a decision is made about the services that he or she should receive but an alcohol or drug abuser be denied the same privilege?

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): On the question of funding for treatment for drug and alcohol problems, is not the central point that most people who attend units are self-referred and do not arrive through the assessment process? Is not the central concern about the prospects for projects, particularly in areas such as inner London, the fact that the appropriateness of community care provisions in relation to assessment and care management is being seriously questioned?

Mr. Yeo: If we were to allow the process of self-referral to continue without any assessment threshold at all, we should create two types of damage. First, people treated in these centres would not, after completion of treatment, be the responsibility of any local authority. There would be no statutory body with any continued interest in their welfare. *[Interruption.]* That would be the case after 1 April.

The second reason why it would be damaging to accept the existing arrangement whereby self-referral takes place is that the resourcing of services would continue to be based entirely on a pattern which was a historical accident and which did not reflect local needs. That is why we rest firmly on the principle that individual assessment should take place.

The third reason why it would be wrong to have a sub-ring fence is that to confine the expenditure to the purchase of residential services would perpetuate a bias in favour of residential services. Hon. Members on both sides of the House, especially Opposition Members, have expressed much concern about the matter and we debated it on 11 February.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): Does the Minister accept that his proposal is a lot of theory whereas practical steps are needed to ensure that facilities are available to those who need them? Not only individuals but communities will lose out. I have seen the benefit of facilities such as Dyfrig House to my constituents, and others throughout England and Wales. They require this sort of assistance to be there when people

need it. If the Minister follows theory, he is ignoring the reality being urged on him from all sides, including those who have experience of such problems.

Mr. Yeo: In the past five months, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I have engaged in extensive discussions with the providers of residential treatment services and we have met a great many providers. In the light of those discussions, and reflecting our own concern about the importance of good services for drug and alcohol abusers, we have decided to do three things.

First, we have issued a circular to local authorities to make clear the high priority which the Government attach to seeing that appropriate services, in response to individually assessed needs, are provided for this important group of clients. Secondly, we have decided that it would be helpful if local authorities engaged in a direct debate with the providers of services about rapid assessment procedures and the way in which the process of identifying the responsible funding authority can be accelerated. Those discussions are already taking place with the help of the Local Government Drugs Forum.

Thirdly—and uniquely for this group of providers—we have decided to set up special monitoring arrangements so that we can have up-to-date quick information about the pattern of referrals by local authorities to drug and alcohol residential treatment centres during the first three months of the new policy.

Those are three responsible ways in which we have recognised the specific needs of the client group and the concerns of the providers of the treatment. I am confident that local authorities will share my view about the importance of the client group and that they will provide services in a responsible and effective way.

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): What concerns people in the voluntary sector who are providing these necessary services at present is that local authority social services simply do not have the resources to provide fast-track assessments. There seem to be no additional funds for them to increase staff and facilities to create the fast-track system.

Mr. Yeo: Part of the extra £140 million to which I referred, which has been made available over and above the money transferred from the Department of Social Security, is designed precisely to pay for the extra staff who will be needed to enable local authorities to carry out the additional assessment work that they will need to undertake in relation to community care as a whole.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): My hon. Friend is right that the essence and philosophy behind the policy is not to perpetuate the present pattern of funding. Does he also accept that it is inevitable that as authorities take on completely new responsibilities in a completely new environment they will be more likely to pay attention to their local residents than those who come from outside the area? People with drug and alcohol problems who refer themselves for treatment tend to be from outside the local authority area and they are likely to be at the bottom of the list.

If my hon. Friend is not prepared to ring-fence the sums for drug and alcohol problems—I understand his argument—will he at least consider giving some guidance to authorities to emphasise that, at least for the first year, they should continue the present pattern of funding so that the facilities currently available at least have some time to adjust to the new pattern of referral?

Mr. Yeo: I am aware of my hon. Friend's interest in the subject. He has spoken to me about it in the past. I cannot give him the assurance that he seeks because even what he suggests would to some extent run counter to the principle of tailoring services to meet individually assessed needs. To require or even issue guidance to local authorities to stick to an existing pattern of expenditure would run counter to our wish that individual needs should be the driving force behind the policy.

The Local Government Drugs Forum is currently promoting discussions between the local authorities and providers, in addition to dealing with the rapid assessment procedures. Its work also addresses how we identify which authority is responsible for the type of person who, as my hon. Friend suggested, might have moved around the country quite a lot as a result of their problems. It is clearly necessary for us to find a local authority which is responsible for that individual. The great advantage of that policy is that, once the authority has accepted responsibility for funding that individual's treatment, it has a continuing responsibility for that individual.

One of the weaknesses of the present policy was acknowledged even by the providers who expressed concern about our decision not to ring-fence the money. Many of the people who have been through the treatment drop out of the system. They lose touch with the people who have given them help, advice and treatment and fall back into their old habits. That happens not in every case but in a significant number of cases. It is less likely that it would happen if a local authority had a continuing relationship with an individual and took an interest in the arrangements for that person after treatment had been completed.

I conclude by saying that the court dismissed the application by an independent sector provider of an alcohol treatment centre for judicial review of the Government's decision not to ring-fence the money. The Government's position was entirely vindicated as a result of the court action. Against that background, I commend the report to the House.

10.27 pm

Mr. David Hinchliffe (Wakefield): Tonight's debate is obviously a serious embarrassment to the Government. It is an embarrassing reminder that their implementation of the community care changes—which were originally due, let us remember, in April 1991—is not only delayed but discredited. Special Grant Report (No. 7) is before the House tonight because three weeks ago on 11 February, when the original report on community care funding was before the House, the Government were being dragged through the courts on a judicial review of their about-turn on the clear commitment to ring-fence future funding of residential drug and alcohol projects. The Government were dragged through the courts because of their shabby disregard for the interests and concerns of those with drug and alcohol problems and for the future operation of many projects throughout the country which have a first-class track record in the care and rehabilitation of people facing such difficulties.

[Mr. David Hinchliffe]

It is astonishing that the Government should try to hide their shame by claiming in local authority social services letter 93/5, issued on 22 February, that

"the sums contained in Grant Report No. 7 are not attributable to services associated with any particular client group."

We are asked to accept that the removal of £20 million from Special Grant Report (No. 6), approved on 11 February, during the Government's time in court was nothing to do with any client group. We are asked to accept that the funding contained in the report before us refers to no one in particular. We are also asked to believe that it is purely coincidental that the £20 million in Special Grant Report (No. 7) is so very similar to the amount arrived at in the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse and Alcohol Concern research document, which was used by the Department of Health's algebra group in its deliberations on the care funding formula. Updated to 1993 levels of income support, it was calculated that around £21·5 million would be needed to fund clients in residential care with drug and alcohol problems—what a coincidence.

The Government might wish to say that the debate has nothing to do with drug and alcohol projects, but everyone else, including some Conservative Back Benchers, knows that that is precisely what we are talking about. We are discussing a most disgraceful about-turn on a clear political commitment, given by the previous Secretary of State for Health, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), in response to widespread public concern—echoed by Conservative Members—that a failure to ring-fence drug and alcohol projects would lead to their rapid demise. In the debate on Lords amendments, the right hon. and learned Member said so. I was present and some Conservative Members may also be able to recall that he said:

"some local authorities might be tempted to give a pretty low priority to the work of outside agencies for unattractive groups, such as drug abusers."

He went on to announce that funding for such groups would receive specific protection:

"To use the jargon, that money will be ring-fenced and local authorities will be able to spend it only on grants to such bodies."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1990; Vol. 175, c. 404.]

When the Government deferred the implementation of the community care changes because of the poll tax shambles, the then Secretary of State made a clear commitment—in a statement to the House on 18 July 1990—to a specific grant for local authority funding of bodies that provide services for drug and alcohol abusers.

Nearly three years later we are asked to believe that the change in the Government's policy on the ring fencing of community care funding has somehow rendered the commitment on drugs and alcohol obsolete, but it has not. The concern expressed by the then Secretary of State at the time is, if anything, even more relevant now in view of the financial climate facing local authorities and voluntary organisations and the fact that drug and alcohol problems are probably even worse in 1993 than they were when the commitment was given.

The Government's assumption that an overall ring fence will protect the projects ignores the reality accepted by the previous Secretary of State that, in practice, unattractive groups are likely to lose out.

Can the Minister say in all honesty that if his local authority had to choose between placing an elderly lady in a nursing home and funding a drug addict or alcoholic, it would go for the latter? Given the tight budgetary conditions of the new financial year, that is just the sort of decision that authorities will have to make.

I suspect that, regardless of political control or of which party is in control, most local authorities are likely to prioritise the elderly. We already have evidence that some drug and alcohol projects will become financially unviable within days of the introduction of the April changes. The SCODA and Alcohol Concern survey show that 71 per cent. of the 94 agencies responding said that they knew that they would be losing income in April. More than half the respondents predicted closure within the first four months of implementation of the community care changes —a loss of nearly 1,000 bed spaces. Those are not scare tactics, as we already have clear evidence of closures.

The North West London Housing Association, which provides a service for problem drinkers in Ealing and Haringey, has forwarded me a letter, which was sent to the North-East Thames regional health authority on 22 February and sets out the position and the difficulties:

"the position is that we are now five weeks away from the introduction of the new arrangements, there is an enormous shortfall in the resources needed to continue present services in Registered Care Homes, . . . there is no sensible or reliable system to deal with homeless problem drinkers and there are other unresolved dilemmas.

The DoH response to all this is to monitor the situation from next month and to continue to claim (as it did as recently as the week before last in the High Court) that removing ring-fencing was in our interests because it would allow local authorities to allocate even more resources than they would have been able to under ring-fencing."

Mr. Levine, the director, continues:

"Against the background above my committee has had no option but to instruct me to close down the service by the end of June at the latest. Their duty as charity trustees requires them not to put the funds of the association at risk or operate when funds cannot be guaranteed."

The financial consequences to the public purse of the collapse of that project are fairly obvious. It will increase pressure on the police, the prison system, hospitals, the probation service, the child care system and social services. For a Government facing a public sector borrowing crisis, the implications for spending on the other services are horrendous.

More important are the human consequences for people such as the woman I met who had come from Essex and was in an alcohol recovery project house in Lambeth. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett)—who is present for the debate—and I met her. She was working towards rehabilitation with her two children in care—she hoped to be back with them soon. What chance will there be of future referrals to that project for women outside London? What chance do the children of such women have of avoiding being permanently in care, as that woman's children are at present?

When the House debated the Special Grant Report (No. 6) on 11 February, I described the arrangements for distributing the funding after April as plain daft. This report is further evidence that the consequences of the formula used by the Government are, to say the least, bizarre. Turning Point, an organisation that is known and respected by hon. Members, has had the figures in the report analysed.

Recording the home local authority of residents during the financial year 1989-90, Turning Point calculated the

likely levels of money required by each authority to fund local residents who enter a project within that authority and those who attend a service in another local authority region. Just as the figures in report No. 6 show no correlation between need and funding, Turning Point's analysis demonstrated marked variations between the distribution in report No. 7 and knowledge of the funding needed.

I am pleased to see that hon. Members from both major parties who represent the London area are present. Once again, inner London has been particularly badly hit by the measure. Turning Point calculates that, of the 13 inner London boroughs, 10 will receive, on average, almost £120,000 less than the research suggested was needed to fund the treatment costs of people from each borough who receive care. Manchester has particular problems, with research suggesting a shortfall of about £500,000.

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): My hon. Friend will be aware that the services in Manchester are already massively overstretched and, as the drug addiction problem is still increasing, the human cost is high. Is my hon. Friend aware that the Greater Manchester police have calculated that the cost to the local community, in terms of criminality due to drug addiction, is already enormous and rising? The fact that the Government have acted as cheapskates over funding for Manchester means that that cost, both in human terms and financial terms, will be borne by the community in the Manchester region.

Mr. Hinchliffe: I am familiar with the constituency of my hon. Friend and well aware of the difficult problems that he and his constituents face every day. I agree that, in Manchester, there will simply be a transfer of the funding requirement from where it should be—in the hands of local authorities so that they can support projects on drug and alcohol problems—into the police budget, which is already very stretched. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that the bizarre nature of the funding arrangements contained in this report mean that, while Manchester will lose £500,000, Avon—which has a large number of private residential and nursing care beds—will, according to Turning Point, receive about £250,000 more than it needs.

Especially worrying is the fact that, as well as illustrating the consequences of the bizarre distribution formula, the research has unearthed clear errors in the calculation by the Department of Social Security of the location of income support payments upon which 50 per cent. of the formula is based. For example, in June 1992, the DSS calculated that 10 people across six care groups were in receipt of enhanced income support in homes within the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. It calculated that there were no claims for clients of residential drug and alcohol establishments.

But Turning Point operates a registered residential facility for drug users in the borough and it is known that income support payments were made to about 17 claimants in the project which was fully occupied during that month. Given that example and others, regardless of the distribution formula, the basis of the Government's calculation of funding is, to say the least, open to question.

I urge the Minister to recognise the inconsistency between the fine words in, for example, "The Health of the Nation", on drinking habits, mental disorder and suicide in particular, and the Government's position on this question. I urge him to reconsider and to recognise the inconsistency between Richmond house media hype and the reality of Government policy.

A classic example has come my way. For some reason I always get two copies of each press release. I received one yesterday dated 1 March from the Department of Health. It is headed:

"Government will tackle alcohol misuse head-on, says Dr. Mawhinney".

I am sorry that the Minister for Health has left the Chamber. The press release goes on to quote the Minister as saying:

"We are not killjoys—a little bit of what you fancy, alcohol-wise, may do you good . . . But it does no harm to remind ourselves again of the scale of the problem."

Hon. Members on both sides of the House are well aware of the scale of the problem and well aware that it is likely to become much worse as a direct result of Government policy.

The Government talk, and the Minister referred to it tonight, of fast-track assessment. What we need is fast-track funding that is guaranteed and distributed in a way which reflects need. It should be recognised that with drug and alcohol projects the traditional means of referral do not tie in with the concept of assessment and care management.

What is needed is an understanding that drug and alcohol projects form a national network and require a funding system which recognises that fact. What is needed is a restoration of proper safeguards to protect the funding of those crucial projects. But, above all, what is needed is a recognition that tonight staring us in the face is a human tragedy which could and should be avoided.

10.42 pm

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): I must comment first on the speech that has just been made by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe). It is a travesty to say that the principle of community care is discredited in the way that the hon. Gentleman described. It is a principle espoused by virtually everybody. The hon. Gentleman said that it was entirely discredited by the announcement this evening. It is a pity that we should start off in that tone of voice.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Talk about tone of voice!

Mr. Rathbone: The hon. Gentleman can talk about how I speak, but I am talking about what has been said.

Mr. Hinchliffe: The hon. Gentleman has completely misquoted me. I was not talking about the principles of community care. I believe in the principles of community care. I was referring to the manner in which the Government have implemented the changes that will take place with effect from 1 April.

Mr. Rathbone: The hon. Gentleman did use the term "discredited", but *Hansard* will prove whether I am right or wrong.

Rather than talking about the principle of community care, which is accepted as an advance on both sides of the House, we should concentrate on the possible difficulties in the announcement this evening.

My hon. Friend the Minister explained the way in which funds had been allocated. In that context, I noticed that my own county of East Sussex has been given a large allocation, which I presume directly reflects the number of

[Mr. Rathbone]

elderly people in residential care and in nursing homes in that county, and the large number of treatment centres in East Sussex run by organisations such as Turning Point.

Although we are delighted that we can identify now how allocations to local authorities have been made, it concerns me—this will come as no surprise to my hon. Friend the Minister—that the formula used bears too little relation to the referrals made in the past and likely to be made in the future.

Of specific concern—this point was touched on by the hon. Member for Wakefield and in interventions by my hon. Friends—is the disproportionately large number of homeless drug and alcohol misusers in inner urban areas. They are unlikely to have an identifiable home local authority, yet they are in greater need of residential care, perhaps, than any other category.

As my hon. Friend the Minister pointed out, guidance was issued for consultation, which clearly stated that admission to residential care should not be delayed whilst the responsible authority is identified. However, with the larger number of homeless people in inner urban areas, less than adequate funding—even through a more appropriate allocation mechanism—will inevitably mean that many with the most urgent need for residential care will be unable to obtain it, because funds for a replacement will not be readily available or, in the worst cases, will not be available at all.

In that instance, fast track cannot work. Fast track must depend on the availability of funds to operate. If it does not work, it will be impossible to meet the individual needs to which my hon. Friend the Minister referred.

All that underscores the error of the transfer formula, which does not account for the geographical spread of referrals to drug and alcohol services. Research revealed that one in five referrals to a service originate from the local authority in which the project is based, so 80 per cent. of referrals originate in other areas. That is crucial not only to the funding material but to the scheme's operation. That was one factor that persuaded the Government to ring-fence funding for that vulnerable client group in the first place.

My hon. Friend's attempt to improve the mechanism for distributing funds still stands a horrible risk of backfiring. I may be wrong in that assessment, and I am sure that Opposition Members hope that their assessment is wrong too—because we care mainly that people should receive the care and services that they need. In case we are right in our assessment, I put a plea to my hon. Friend the Minister.

Instead of monitoring for three months, the monitoring period should be extended to at least six months, and preferably to the end of this year—in other words, over a nine-month period. The truth is that homes will taking steps now to get people into their homes and to keep them there, and that will put out of kilter the statistics that will be available during the first three months of the new scheme's operation. Although I appreciate the direction that the Government want to pursue in their application of funding, and hope that they will be proved correct, we owe it to the people who need the services in question to monitor the scheme longer than is presently envisaged.

10.49 pm

Ms. Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I wish to draw the Minister's attention to the great concern that has been expressed—not only to me, I am sure—by the organisations that provide the care that we have been discussing. That applies not least to the Campaign for the Homeless and Rootless and the West London Mission, which has formed a group comprising 19 organisations that provide 22 centres—some residential and some providing day-care facilities—offering particular care and concern to those suffering from drug and alcohol abuse.

Those organisations make the specific point that, certainly in London, the removal of ring fencing for particularly vulnerable members of society is aggravated by certain factors. First, people move from one area of London to another, but at least 40 per cent. of the facilities are concentrated in three boroughs of the capital. The organisations also fear that there will be a desperate shortfall not only in basic funding but in the number of people prepared to accept responsibility for individual clients whose first residence is not in the borough to which they go to be housed or treated.

In my constituency, St. Mungo's Association has been running a registered residential home for single homeless men, all of whom have histories of varying degrees of grave mental problems—some exacerbated by drug and alcohol abuse. The care that is necessary for such people simply to make it possible for them to function in society again on the most basic, fundamental level is intensive, and takes up a great deal of time. The association's costs are currently covered by direct payments from the Department of Social Security, at a rate of £188·30 per head. It also has a grant of £30,000 from the local authority.

At present, of the 29 residents living in those houses, 10 could be deemed to be local; they are Camden residents. Between seven and eight come from the borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and the 11 other residents are referred to the registered residential home from the St. Mungo's central Endell street referral point.

The organisation is desperately worried about the possibility of an enormous shortfall, which it believes will amount to about £42,000. It is almost impossible for it to plan for any future provision. It fears that its own costs will inevitably increase if it has to pursue individual local authorities to provide for its residents; but its major concern is that relationships that have been built up—not only with its present residents, but with those for whom it has cared in the past and those for whom it wishes to care in the future—run a grave risk of being damaged. It feels that its residents will feel that the changes in the present system smack entirely of bureaucracy and officialdom, and that the necessary trust which is the basic step in rehabilitating such people will be destroyed at the first stroke.

I strongly urge the Minister to reconsider the present arrangements. I heartily endorse the remarks of the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone): I feel that the time scale that the Department is setting itself for monitoring is far too short. The idea of fast-track assessment is an absolute impossibility for most local authorities; they have not the staff, the funds or the time to be able to "fast-track" some of the most vulnerable members of society.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) spoke of the choice that many local authorities will have to make between an elderly, frail lady and someone suffering from the effects of drug and alcohol abuse. I entirely agree; but let me point out to the Minister that many frail, elderly ladies are also sufferers from drug and alcohol abuse. Surely it is in that regard that we should express what I believe should be our true concern: that "care in the community" should mean caring for everyone in the community.

10.54 pm

Ms. Liz Lynne (Rochdale): I was saddened to hear of the Government's change of heart about the ring fencing of the drug and alcohol budget. I was a member of the drug and alcohol abuse committee in Rochdale when the news was first announced that the Government were to ring-fence that budget. Every member of the committee was delighted, because it meant that some of the services would be protected. I urge the Government to change their mind now.

Why have the Government plucked the figure of £20 million out of the air as the amount to be set aside for the judicial review? I have asked a number of people involved in drug and alcohol work how much money was needed for rehabilitation in England, but none of them came up with that figure. I should be grateful if the Minister could tell us where it came from.

I agree that three months for monitoring purposes is certainly not long enough. There should be a proper review of what will happen after 1 April to drug and alcohol services in the community.

The drug and alcohol service has always been the Cinderella service. It is often said that the mental health service is the Cinderella service, but the drug and alcohol service is even more so. We have heard that it will be believed that elderly people should benefit more from community care, whereas drug and alcohol misusers will be put at the end of the list.

There has been much talk recently about drugs and crime. Indeed, only yesterday we debated juvenile crime and juvenile offenders. We must accept the link between crime and drug and alcohol abuse. It is a great problem in Rochdale and the north-west. Greater Manchester was mentioned specifically in that connection.

Someone rang me today to tell me about the case of a 29-year-old man with three children. He has a heroin habit and steals to feed it. He has tried to get treatment at our local drug rehabilitation centre, but there is a waiting list. He is asking for treatment and help to get off the roller-coaster, but he cannot get it. After 1 April, it will be even more difficult. If the budget is not ring-fenced, more people will be sucked into crime.

Several surveys have been carried out on crime and its relationship with drug and alcohol abuse. The first to which I draw the House's attention was carried out in Nottingham. An audit in December 1990 found that alcohol was a factor in 88 per cent. of cases of criminal damage, 78 per cent. of assaults, 40 per cent. of instances of domestic abuse and 30 per cent. of child abuse cases. That is happening across the country, but we do not have enough statistics to know whether the true position is even worse.

Another report revealed:

"young 'heavy drinkers' are more likely than 'light drinkers' to report having committed minor violent offences, and more

[Ms. Liz Lynne]

likely to report that they have been the victim of crime . . . 9 per cent. of adult males, 9 per cent. of young males and 4 per cent. of young females in the prison population are clinically diagnosed as dependent on alcohol, and perhaps as many as half drink more than the . . . recommended sensible limits."

In the past few days, young offenders have been much discussed in the House and by the media. A report by the probation service states that probation officers have cited addiction or compulsion as a key factor in 34 per cent. of crime committed by young offenders. Among the 17-year-olds surveyed, the influence of alcohol was a factor in 41 per cent. of cases and the influence of drugs in 30 per cent. of cases. Among the same age group, 6 per cent. of offences were committed to pay for the habit.

As I have already said, so many people are being sucked into crime to pay for and feed their habit. It is about time that the Government did something to stop that. I urge them to change their mind today about the ring fencing.

Talking about juvenile offending yesterday in the House, the Home Secretary said:

"We are seeking to develop yet stronger policies to deal with the abuse of drugs. It is one of the causes of crime that society has the ability to control, as long as we back up the police, the voluntary agencies and every other agency to try to contain it."—[*Official Report*, 2 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 149.]

The Home Secretary said that yesterday. Today I ask the Government to change their minds, ring-fence the drug and alcohol budget again, and help the people in our society who are misusers of drugs and alcohol to have a decent standard of living.

11 pm

Mr. John Bowis (Battersea): I welcome the global figure that the Minister has announced will be provided for community care. It is an excellent figure, and we should set our discussion against that background; that is where we start.

Secondly, I believe that history may record that it was as a result of a question from me to the Minister at the time that the ring fence for drug and alcohol projects was originally announced, so I have some personal interest in that success, and in the services that we are discussing. In my constituency, there is the Davies centre, which is part of Turning Point, and other projects such as the Cranston project, to which I have already referred in an intervention.

I am joining in what has been rather a good debate. Perhaps the Opposition Front Bench spokesman was a little belligerent, but that was nicely balanced by the quieter tones of my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). We all share a genuine desire to help and support people who have the problems resulting from addiction to drugs or alcohol to which everyone who has spoken has referred.

Much is being done in the health service. There are many initiatives in hospitals, detoxification units and so on. Representing the inner-London area of Battersea, my concern is that people should not take the view that the problem should be passed out to the shires—that we somehow export our problems to be looked after. We should remember that Battersea is also a halfway home for people who have been in detoxification units and are on their way back home.

Inner cities themselves create much of the problem—they create many drug, alcohol and mental health problems—but people who have suffered in the inner cities do not necessarily want to live outside London and the other big cities. They want eventually to come home. The wonderful support that the Davies centre and other such places can give enables them to come back to their homes within the city.

That is what I, working alongside, value so much, and that is why I hope that the Minister will monitor most carefully the effects of his decision to ensure that the money reaches the people who need it, that it is filtered through the new wider ring-fenced system and that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes so wisely said, the fears that some of us have are proved groundless and the optimism built into the new system is justified. Should that prove not to be the case, we shall then be able to put matters right.

11.4 pm

Ms. Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): I hope that the Minister will listen to the overwhelming cross-party support for a rethink of the Government position on ring fencing. I shall briefly refer again to the important conclusions of the Turning Point survey which have informed the debate and to which my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) referred.

I should like to provide some specific evidence from the London borough of Southwark. The Government's distribution formula suggests that Southwark needs about £116,000 to support its services for drug and alcohol misusers. The Turning Point survey, calculated on the basis of where the misusers are, suggests a figure of £244,000. Southwark will get £128,000 less than the current service providers deem necessary for drug and alcohol misusers living in Southwark. Let us contrast that with Kent. The Government believe that Kent needs £718,000. Turning Point, which deals with real clients rather than attributed figures, says that Kent needs £230,000, producing a potential surplus of nearly £500,000.

Why is there such a difference? The Turning Point study accurately reflects the unique nature of this particular group of community care service users. In many cases we are talking about people who have been in and out of drug clinics all over the country for many years. Typically, they become homeless and are without family support because of their substance abuse. They are not a settled group. Their use of services is therefore different from that of other community care service users.

Specialist clinics report that only 4 per cent. of drug and alcohol misusers are referred by social services—50 per cent. of them are self-referred. Their links with home or any local authority are slim. They may move around the country because they are trying to avoid their own local drugs scene or because the area where they originated does not have the facilities to treat their needs.

Because Southwark has among the lowest number of permanent residents who are known to have drug or alcohol problems, it gets less money under the Government's system of distributing the community care grant. However, the reality is that people who are homeless and have drug and alcohol dependencies will continue to come to inner city boroughs like Southwark. They will not stay in small leafy towns just because the Minister's bureaucratic formula tells them to do so.

According to Turning Point's research, Suffolk will receive three times as much cash as it needs while 10 out of the 13 London boroughs will receive an average of £1·18 million less than the residents require for their care to be sustained.

It is particularly important that the total found by Turning Point to be needed properly to support alcohol and drug abuse facilities—£21 million—is close to the £20 million that the Government announced that they had set aside during the judicial review. The issue is not that far more money is needed, but for that money to be directed to where the people are and where the services need support.

Ministers are in a small minority in believing that their policy is right. It is opposed by every organisation representing informed opinion—not just the providers of services to people with drug and alcohol problems, but the Association of Directors of Social Services, the British Association of Social Workers, the Institute of Health Services Management and the National Care Homes Association.

I conclude with a simple question to the Minister which I hope he will answer when he replies to the debate. If he makes such play of the importance of stability and protection for the services of elderly people living in independent residential homes during the first year of community care reforms, why does not he accept that exactly the same need for stability and consistency applies to services for people who suffer from drug and alcohol misuse?

11.10 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): Like the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), I think that we have had a good and well-informed debate. I hope that the Minister will take note of the fact that every hon. Member who has spoken so far has expressed grave concerns about the lack of operation of the ring fence.

The irony is that this debate need never have taken place. It would not have been necessary to be in our places this evening if the pledge that was given in 1990 by the then Secretary of State for Health, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), had been honoured. He guaranteed that ring fencing would be provided for drug and alcohol residential centres, in response to cross-party support in the House, from those in another place and from expert organisations, some of which have been referred to by my hon. Friends and Conservative Members. That support and pressure still exists and the decision to withdraw the 1990 ring-fencing promise has been universally condemned. I hope that the Minister will note that 123 hon. Members from both sides of the House have signed the early-day motion standing in my name which seeks a reversal of the Government's policy. I know from my work as the chair of the all-party alcohol misuse group and from the first-hand concerns that have been passed to me by both practitioners and clients of the impact that the Government's policy will have.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) has already referred to the Standing Conference on Drug Abuse and Alcohol Concern survey of 91 residential units. The Minister will know that half are threatened with closure by July. Some are already issuing redundancy notices to staff so that they might comply with the legal position that confronts them. Interestingly, hardly any of them believe that the Government's last-minute response to the furore caused by their broken promises will help to guarantee their future. A limp advice note from Ministers to local authorities together with a still undefined fast-track assessment procedure, whatever that means, is hardly an adequate replacement for guaranteed funding, which is what each centre needs.

The Minister will know that the imminence of closure is not a red herring or a false threat. It stems from the reliance of the centres on income support payments from their clients, payments that will disappear from 1 April, and from the special nature of their clients. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the 140 drug and alcohol residential centres provide a national network of specialist help, support and rehabilitation services and offer short-term treatment. He will know also that there is a high turnover of residents.

It was a recognition of the differences between alcohol and drug misusers and the groups that form the overwhelming majority of the recipients of community care—the elderly and the mentally ill, for example—that prompted the then Secretary of State for Health in 1990 to make the ring-fencing commitment in the first place. Unlike the elderly, alcohol and drug misusers do not enter residential care as a last resort or as a poor alternative to community-based services. They accept such care as a positive first step, or a short-term option, to allow them to regain control of their lives away from the environment of alcohol and drug misuse that has been the cause of their problems.

The decision to ring-fence drug and alcohol misuse services was made because even in 1990 it was clear that the competing priorities on the community care budget meant that the client groups which were more popular or acceptable, or which had a legal entitlement to service, would be prioritised and that is precisely the situation that we face now. The present Home Secretary described it in graphic language in June 1990 when he said that the elderly and disabled were popular and had a powerful lobby and he accepted that some local authorities were less inclined to give the correct priority to the mentally ill. He also accepted that drug and alcohol abuse were not always popular recipients of social services money. As ever, the right hon. and learned Gentleman was a master of understatement.

The £20 million given in DSS payments for the direct use of those centres will now be lost in the general community care pool. My hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield referred to the press release and notice that accompanied the instrument that we are debating. It is clear that that money is not being ring-fenced.

The Minister argued tonight, as he argued in the Adjournment debate on the subject last December, that the ring-fencing commitment would merely have perpetuated the existing pattern of services. He must know that that is not so. The ring-fencing commitment was not merely a case of trying to preserve the old order. It was a case of trying to smooth the transition to a new order. I think I see the Minister looking astonished at that remark. He should read the speeches of his right hon. and learned Friend and other hon. Friends, who made it clear that the purpose of the ring-fencing commitment was not designed to set in stone a commitment for all time, but to ensure sufficient breathing space for a proper allocation of resources and development of services to occur so that the principles of community care could be properly met.

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

All that has gone down the tubes and the Minister's decision has doomed dozens of centres, including those in my area, to closure. He has given them, and the local authorities involved, less than six months to introduce procedures that it was originally envisaged would take until 1996 to get right.

In the debate last December, we went into some of the issues and spoke of the incredible complexity of the referral arrangements to each centre. The centres know that the fast-track procedure about which the Minister spoke and which he lamentably failed to explain in detail will not work. The professionals and the clients know that it will not work. Why on earth will not the Minister recognise that it will not work?

By refusing to countenance ring-fencing, the Minister is not only arrogantly dismissing the advice of drug and alcohol centre professionals, but is dooming the 5,000 people who use their services to a life on the streets without treatment, without care and without any hope of rehabilitation back into a normal life in society—and that at a time when the problem of drug and alcohol misuse is not only growing but has finally been recognised by the Government.

The annual cost to society of alcohol misuse is estimated at £2·5 billion. A few months ago, when the White Paper "The Health of the Nation" was launched, we heard of the Government's determination to tackle alcohol problems. How can that be squared with a policy that will close 140 drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres? In a week in which we have heard so much noise from Ministers about bearing down hard on crime, it is more than a little ironic to find the Government adding to the crime problems of the nation, bearing in mind that the majority of hardened drug users finance their habit by illegal means. They do so by theft, drug dealing and prostitution. With people having nowhere else to go and no prospect of help because the centres have been closed, the result will be more crime, not less. Society will end up picking up the tab for the Government's obstinate refusal to see sense on this issue.

My hon. Friends have already alluded to some of the anomalies in the report and have dealt with the detail. I make a last-minute heartfelt plea to the Minister not only to monitor what is going on—from 1 April, he will be monitoring redundancies and the closure of vital drug and alcohol centres—but, more important, to reinstate the ring-fencing commitment. If he does not, not only the people who use the centres but society as a whole will face a bleak future.

11.20 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), who made an excellent speech. I only wish that someone of his character and calibre, and with his understanding of the issues and preparedness to protect the services and the people who use them, represented the Government at the Dispatch Box tonight.

I find the Minister's announcement extremely depressing. He seeks to hide behind the fact that the High Court found in his favour. I must tell him that the High Court has made many mistakes over many years. Besides, it is not really very important whether the High Court found in his favour on the ring-fencing argument. That is no justification. We want ring fencing to protect the projects and to protect the victims of drug and alcohol misuse.

I represent a depressed, deprived inner-city area. Our unemployment rate is shooting up. It is now well over 20 per cent. On some estates, it is over 40 per cent. The number of people who are suffering serious problems of alcohol abuse is very great and is increasing. Moreover, the figures are often understated in surveys because many people who suffer from alcohol abuse seek to hide it by various means. I do not necessarily blame them for hiding it; I merely recognise that it happens. Likewise, the number of youngsters who are becoming involved in serious problems of drug abuse is increasing all the time.

I am glad to say that we live in a society in which there is universal condemnation of drug abuse. Unfortunately, there is little less concern about and research into the reasons why young people in particular become involved in drug abuse. We live in a dreadfully alcohol-related society, however. One has only to take any underground or bus journey in London or watch television to be fed a steady stream of advertisements encouraging one to drink. That advertising rubs off. Drinking is a form of escape and solace and it is also often the result of a great deal of peer-group pressure. I believe that the problems of unemployment, overcrowed and poor-quality housing, debt and depression lead people into drinking. We must recognise the many causes.

All that the Minister proposes is that, in effect, the overstretched and overworked projects that are doing their best to cope with the avalanche of requests for help should be cut and should lose money because they will be unable to compete in what has become the marketplace of social services demands in local authority decision making.

Many hon. Members have served on local authorities —in my case, I am glad to say, in slightly happier times. If I had thought that the 1970s were going to be the high point of local authority expenditure, I would have spent a bit more. Local councillors face an absolute nightmare in deciding between a whole variety of competing demands in every conceivable area. From my time at the London borough of Haringey in the 1970s and early 1980s I know that, even then, it was not a very popular move to go to a social services commmittee and ask for money for a drug or alcohol recovery project. The committee would say that it needed the money for pensioners' organisations, under-fives, people with disabilities, and so on—all perfectly sensible and worthy causes, which we wish to see supported. Anyone now going to a social services committee and saying that a certain amount of money was coming in would be confronted with a host of people trying to get their hands on funds for equally valuable and worthy causes. The purpose of the great campaign to have the community care budget ring fenced is to protect the principle of community care provision by local authorities. That is an added reason for having ring fencing of the budget for drug and alcohol recovery units.

I have visited a number of schemes in north London. One that comes to mind is the women's alcohol recovery project based at Drayton park in Highbury, which has a very dedicated staff and does an absolutely first-rate job. Most of the women are self-referred or have been brought in by friends. They are not necessarily local residents, or even identifiable as resident anywhere. Many are people of no fixed abode, having become homeless and friendless as

a result of the trauma of alcohol abuse and having been taken in by some good Samaritan. The people who provide such services face the future with a degree of horror. They know that the demand for their expertise and services is increasing steadily, but that their ability to meet it is reducing steadily. They recognise that this proposal does not help them at all—a point that they made very articulately in the Lobby this year.

Mrs. Audrey Wise (Preston): Does my hon. Friend know that his point about expertise is made also by the directors of social services? Leaving aside the other problems that my hon. Friend has has correctly identified, those people do not have the necessary expertise to deal with the difficulties created by alcoholism. This is especially true now that they have to cope with so many changes in care in the community. My hon. Friend may not know that when they expressed their feelings to the Select Committee on Health they were absolutely backed up by senior health service officials, who pointed out that failures in this area will result in our having more people in the care of the medical side of the service, at greatly increased cost.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend makes an extremely valuable point as a distinguished member of the Select Committee on Health. Under-funding of any type of social or primary care service results in enormous demands on the acute health services, which are put at risk of being unable to cope. If the Minister has the time or the inclination, or even the interest, he should spend some time visiting general hospitals in London. It would be helpful if he were to listen to the debate. Perhaps he has so little interest in the subject that he cannot be bothered to listen to what hon. Members are saying about their experiences. When his mind was elsewhere I was about to suggest that he should get to know something of what hospitals experience in having to deal with the victims of these problems because of the lack of facilities elsewhere.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise the force of our argument about the need for ring fencing for these services and full support for the very dedicated people who are doing so much good work in this area. Why should they have to cope with cuts and closures and with increasing numbers of drug and alcohol abusers on the streets, causing more problems and more deprivation for themselves and others?

11.29 pm

Mr. Ian McCartney (Makerfield): This debate is marked by the fact that the nine Members from both sides who have participated, excluding my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe)—and I exclude him in a friendly fashion—have given eloquent testimony to the fact that what the Minister has announced tonight is wrong in principle, although Conservative Members may have said that some Labour Members put the view more passionately than they did.

The underlying trend of what has been said is that the markets do not involve successful fast-tracking. The resources are not following projects, although the Government gave a commitment to that. The Government gave away the promise made in 1990 by the former Secretary of State to ring-fence resources. That has given greater impetus to the feeling in the community that the Government, first, do not have a real commitment to the principle of community care and, secondly, have a hidden agenda in terms of leaving local authorities holding the can for the serious problems which will arise because of underfunding in the care gap.

In the debate on Special Grant Report No. 6, I said that the Minister was a Shylock. He proved tonight that he is not only a Shylock but a Pinocchio because, whenever he raises the issue of community care, one believes less of what he says about the Government's intentions in that regard.

To attack organisations for taking a case to court fundamentally undermines the real reasons why they went to court. They went to court out of total desperation at failing to convince the Minister that the Government's commitment should have been maintained. That commitment has not been maintained because the surveys and practical experience of the organisations show that 71 per cent. of projects have begun to lose income in the first nine months of the new scheme. By December 1993, 70 per cent. of all projects will have disappeared from most regions in the United Kingdom.

In the House a week ago, the Secretary of State introduced the document, "Making London Better", which contains two basic principles. I quote:

> "The number and variety of community nursing services available have increased, for example, through walk-in and telephone advice, counselling, and support groups and help for those facing crisis and long term illness. In London some of these initiatives are already underway. The pace of change can be speeded up . . . Important elements make up the process of modernising primary health care in London . . . Devising accessible services for Londoners with special needs such as those who are mentally ill or who misuse drugs or other substances."

A week ago, the Government gave a commitment to new services in London. Tonight, we are seeing the withdrawal of those services. The background to the withdrawal of services is that the number of addicts registered in London is 10 times the national average. In 1990, the age-adjusted rate in Greater London for chronic liver disease and cirrhosis was 60 per cent. higher for males and 31 per cent. higher for females than the average for England and Wales as a whole. Cirrhosis is a key indicator of the level of alcohol problems in the community.

Despite the Government's evidence and the introduction of the White Paper last week, the Minister intends to follow through with Special Grant Report No. 7 and withdraw the resources. It is an act of criminal irresponsibility by a Minister who never listens or learns. As a consequence, the most vulnerable people in the community suffer as a result of his decisions.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): He is shaking.

Mr. McCartney: If the hon. Gentleman had any compassion, he would be not only shaking but apologising for this shabby report. The Minister should have further discussions about the ring fencing immediately. We need no back-chat from the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

By December 1993, 69 projects and 1,521 beds will have been withdrawn and two thirds of the agencies will have given redundancy notices to skilled staff. It beggars belief that, within nine months of the projects coming under a new financial regime, skilled people working with drug and alcohol abusers in the community are being given redundancy notices. What a commitment to community care.

[Mr. McCartney]

It does not stop there. In every region in Britain there will be closure after closure month after month from 1 April right through to 31 December. Projects throughout the country for men, for women, for men and women, for women and children, and for men, women and children will close. It is a league table of shame.

Last week the Government announced league tables for performance. How about introducing a league table for the Government's monitoring of the closure of alcohol abuse services? By the end of this year, 1,533 beds will be lost from projects in the United Kingdom despite the Government's much-vaunted claim that the introduction of community care would bring an improvement in facilities in the community.

Having listened to hon. Members on both sides of the House tonight, the Minister still has an opportunity to change his mind. If he does not want to listen to me and my honourable colleagues because of his party political bias and his commitment to Government policy, let him listen to his hon. Friends behind him. Let him listen to what they have said and bear in mind the areas from which they come. Let him listen to the problems that they have outlined. They did so because they know from their personal experience, from the organisations which have come to them and from the constituents who have submitted proposals to them, that the dogma does not work.

The practicalities are such that the Government's proposals will lead to the closure of projects, an increase in crime and a reduction in the ability of individuals in the community to self-refer to organisations in the community. That is the most damning effect of the proposal. By refusing to ring-fence the money, the Miniser will reduce the opportunity for self-referral. Fast-tracking interferes with that opportunity. The market will not recognise self-referrals. That will create winners and losers. The losers will always be the users of the two services. I beg the Minister to change his mind now.

11.36 pm

Mr. Yeo: This has been a valuable debate. I have listened carefully to the views expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I had hoped that I might hear rather more speeches vigorously in support of the Government's decision, but never mind—I know that there is such a thing as a silent majority on such matters.

The hon. Members who have spoken obviously attach a high priority to the needs of drug and alcohol abusers, and so do the Government, but hon. Members seem to assume for some reason that their views will not be shared by any of their local authority colleagues. No one has explained why that sudden divergence of opinion should arise, but that was the underlying assumption behind every request for ring fencing to be restored.

The Turning Point survey has been referred to by many hon. Members. It acknowledges that even in 1990, long before the local authorities assume responsibilities for community care in April this year, about half the applications for top-up funding for residential services for drug and alcohol abusers made to social service departments in the London boroughs and county areas surveyed were successful. The local authorities already recognised the needs even before they took on the duties that they are about to have.

Let me explain to the hon. Member for Makerfield (Mr. McCartney) that the Special Grant Report (No. 7), which we shall approve in a few minutes, does not remove resources. It adds £20 million to the special transitional grant, which is ring fenced for the purpose of expenditure on community care services—some of which will be for drug and alcohol abusers. The decision not to ring-fence the money for the residential treatment services does not mean that a single penny has been removed from the funds that the Government make available for drug and alcohol service providers.

The way in which the argument has been put this evening sometimes seemed a little over the top. Let us remind ourselves that since 1979 the real increase in expenditure on personal social services has been two thirds. In the past three years, the real increase in the personal social services standard spending assessment has been one fifth. If we take account of the special transitional grant of £565 million—I remind the House that that is not merely the money being transferred from social security, but an extra £140 million to help local authorities develop their services—and the standard spending assessment, next year local authorities will have at their disposal 15 per cent. more resources for social services expenditure than they have this year. It will be up to local authorities to decide how much of that massive sum they allocate to the treatment of drug and alcohol abusers.

The hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) intervened in the speech by the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) about the resourcing of Manchester.

Ms. Glenda Jackson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Yeo: No, I have only four minutes to wind up.

This year, Manchester city council is spending £64 million on social services and it has a personal social services standard spending assessment of £76 million. Next year, the SSA will be £79 million and it will get a special transitional grant of £6 million, which is excluded from the rate-capping calculations. The only reason why there could be any shortfall in funding for social services in Manchester is because of the decisions of the Labour-controlled Manchester city council, which is exclusively responsible for denying the people of Manchester the services that they need.

A great deal has been made of the survey by Turning Point, which is scarcely a scientific study, as it is based on studies using 1989-90 prices and arbitrarily grossed them up by 68 per cent. over four years. I am not sure why costs should rise by that massive amount during that time, but I hope that when local authorities make referrals to drug and alcohol treatment centres they will at least ensure that they are getting value for money.

I recognise that the distribution decision is difficult. We went through detailed discussions with the local authority associations about how to distribute funds for community care. There is no obviously right answer. We are all concerned to try to achieve a smooth transition to the new policy, but 35 per cent. of the special transitional grant will be distributed on the basis of the present income support

expenditure pattern and the other 65 per cent. is based on SSAs, which take into account socio-economic factors and tend to favour the inner cities.

I believe that that was the best judgment that we could arrive at to achieve the smooth transfer that we want. I stress again that our community care policy, the generous funding that we provide, and the way in which the money is being distributed are not intended to protect the position of every provider of treatment, but to ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of the individual.

I must inform the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms. Jowell) that we are giving the drug and alcohol service providers exactly the same protection that she says is being accorded to the providers of residential homes for the elderly. They are all being treated alike.

On monitoring, I recognise the concerns of my hon. Friends, but I am not sure how they reconcile with the fact that Opposition Members have told us that some of the establishments will go out of business in three months. If that is the case, our three-month period will be long enough, especially bearing in mind that client turnover in the centres is rapid—the average stay is only 19 weeks. Monitoring by the social services inspectorate will continue, even after the end of three months, to see how the implementation of community care is going.

In conclusion, no providers of residential or other treatment for drug and alcohol abusers have anything to fear from our policy if the services that they offer are of a kind that are recognised as effective and valuable for that client group.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 91, Noes 59.

Division No. 172] **[11.43 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Butcher, John
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Robert Hughes.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Etherington, Bill
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hall, Mike
Harvey, Nick
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCartney, Ian
McMaster, Gordon
Mahon, Alice
Meale, Alan
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Pope, Greg
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Wilson, Brian
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn and
Mr. Malcolm Chisholm.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Special Grant Report (No. 7) (House of Commons Paper No. 504), which was laid before this House on 22nd February, be approved.

11.53 pm

Mr. Corbyn: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As fewer than 100 voted in favour of the report it can hardly be said to have the full-hearted consent of the House, so is it now legal?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The answer to that is yes.

PETITION

Railway Stations

11.54 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): I have a petition containing more than 1,000 signatures, which is addressed,

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The petition has been prepared by Mrs. J. Salter of Hele vilage, Torquay. Mrs. Salter is confined to a wheelchair and she draws to the attention of the House the fact that it is now British Rail policy to remove staff from its railway stations from 6 o'clock in the evening.

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of the implications for disabled people, women travelling by themselves, the elderly and the young. The petition asks the House to urge the Secretary of State for Transport to make representations to British Rail to change that policy forthwith. The petition ends in the usual form:

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will for ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

George Beattie

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Andrew Mitchell.]*

11.55 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Tonight's Adjournment debate is about a 19-year-old Carluke boy who was convicted of murder in 1973. A simple lad—not very well educated—he was known in Carluke as a big softie. My speech will be confined to George Beattie's conviction, and I seek to prove to the House that it was a great miscarriage of justice. George Beattie did not and could not have murdered Margaret McGlouchlan. George Beattie is innocent.

A major problem with miscarriages of justice is getting the case reconsidered by the authorities. The only way to make Ministers or civil servants sit up and take notice is to get the message through to the public, through the newspapers or television. Miscarriages of justice—particularly those involving murder—are generally so complicated that newspapers and television present only a simplified version of the case, and then from one particular angle. In reality, such cases have many aspects and involve many intricate pieces of evidence.

George Beattie was convicted of murder in 1973. BBC Television broadcast two "Rough Justice" programmes about him in 1983 and 1985, and produced persuasive evidence that he was innocent of the crime for which he is in gaol today.

Those programmes concentrated solely on the evidence put before the court, and there is now evidence concerning police conduct in the case that points to George Beattie being a victim of a miscarriage of justice on several levels.

The aspect of Beattie's case to which I refer concerns personalities, professional reputation, police bureaucracy and—yes—politics. To understand fully what happened to Beattie, one must understand what was happening during the police investigation. The leading figure in the police work was Scotland's finest detective, William Muncie. Coincidentally, Muncie was born in Carluke, where the murder took place.

Success in the case against Beattie meant that Chief Superintendent Muncie would bring his career in Lanarkshire CID to a triumphant end, in the town of his birth. After the case, he went on to be Lanark assistant chief constable—then, even better, assistant chief constable of Strathclyde. Muncie's promotion meant that he left behind him an investigative disaster, with an innocent man gaoled and a murderer gone free.

Muncie had an impressive reputation. He had investigated 53 cases of murder, and the McGlouchlan case was to be his 54th. He had found the murderer every time—not one failure in any of his cases. It was a remarkable record to live up to.

Among Muncie's big murder case successes was the serial killer Peter Manuel; Gordon Hay—the Biggar murder; and James Keenan, the Lanark case. They were all solved using Muncie's favourite method, which was outlined in his memoirs. He first decided who was guilty, then took months finding the proof. That method failed him in the case of the murder at Carluke, when George Beattie was convicted.

To understand what happened, we must imagine being present at some of the investigations. Perhaps the key moment was 6 am on 11 July 1973. In the dawn light, Chief

Superintendent Muncie questioned George Beattie in the Carluke glen, where the body of a young woman, Margaret McGlouchlan, had been found four days earlier. The superintendent had already been up half the night dealing with this, his last case. Perhaps it is not surprising in the circumstances that he forgot all his own golden rules, and allowed his men to charge Beattie. No doubt in other circumstances he would have shown better judgment.

In fact, Mr. Muncie was trusting to luck: he had been very lucky during his career, but his luck ran out that morning. No doubt he thought that the evidence against Beattie would turn up, but it did not. Nothing seems to have gone right in the case from the start.

When Beattie was charged, Muncie was already four days into a botch-up of an investigation over which he had lost control. Uniformed police had trampled all over the scene of the crime before Muncie even got there; the photographer, acting without Muncie's direction, had missed a vital shot of the umbrella that the victim had used to defend herself. It would have told the court so much about what had happened—but there was no photographic evidence of where that umbrella had been found, and in what condition. One of the key points is whether the umbrella was up or down at the time; but, because Mr. Muncie was not on top form, we cannot say with any certainty which was the case.

Most important of all, Muncie's men had found a knife on the ground near the victim. They were all convinced that it was the murder weapon, but they were wrong. The chief superintendent himself soon realised that the rust on its blade ruled it out. What happened to his opinion shows the lack of organisation on the team: it did not reach all its members. That may not be surprising. The team of detectives came from half a dozen different stations, and examination of the police work reveals that liaison was poor.

Mr. Muncie, however, added to the problems himself, perhaps because of his robust personality. He let a Scottish newspaper fly him around the area in a helicopter; he said that it helped him to see the hidden paths around the glen. We may wonder why he did not know all those hidden paths, having spent his boyhood in the village when all the children played in the glen. The important point, however, is that the *Daily Record* picture taken from the helicopter was an investigative mistake of the first order. The picture that the newspaper published gave away one of the key police secrets—where the body had been found.

But there was worse to come. Two of Mr. Muncie's officers gave a guided tour of the scene of the crime to the man on whom Muncie eventually fixed as the murderer. That suspect—my constituent George Beattie—told officers John Adam and George Waddell that he had walked through the glen at the time when they believed that the murder had taken place. The officers decided to take him to the scene—through the police cordon, past Muncie's caravan headquarters, right to where the murder had happened. It started to rain.

Hon. Members may think that what happened next was highly irregular. There the men were, standing right by the scene of the murder—on the very spot where the attack on the victim had begun. When it began to rain, they did not walk the few yards to the police caravan headquarters for shelter; instead, Detective Constable Waddell ran past the caravan, nearly a mile to the car. The other officer—Adam—was left alone with Beattie at the scene of the crime. Apparently, he took no notes of what he did or said to Beattie while they were there.

The police would claim that Beattie was not a suspect at the time; he only became that when he told them details about the scene of the crime. But Beattie was the only man whom the police found who had been in the glen at about the time when they thought that the victim had been killed, so he must have been some kind of suspect. Why take him to the scene of the crime, leave him alone with an officer and then claim that he could not have known details of the scene unless he had committed the murder?

The story told by the two police officers had changed by the time it got to court. Adam, the man who stayed with Beattie in the glen, later claimed that he, not Waddell, had gone to the car. Waddell did not corroborate the second version. What was the head of a police investigation doing allowing such behaviour? Muncie knew that detectives should never show a suspect the scene of a crime. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Adam and Waddell were immediately sent back to base in Motherwell and took no further part in the inquiry after that incident.

We might wonder why none of the other detectives heard of the "guided tour" of the scene of the crime. Of course, the officers involved were no longer on the case, because they had been sent back home, but no one told the other detectives on the investigation what had happened. Later, when another two detectives questioned Beattie, they were surprised to learn that he knew so much about the scene of the crime.

The handling of Beattie got worse. He was left waiting in a room where the girl's clothing was laid out. His interrogators were doubly surprised when he described clothing that had been locked in her suitcase. The most astonished was Sergeant Dougie Mortimer from Lanark. He knew little about the case, because he had been on holiday and had only just joined the inquiry. When Beattie came out with the details about the victim's clothing, Mortimer persisted until the young lad was having something like an epileptic fit.

There followed an aspect of the case that the police completely failed to investigate. Beattie concocted a hare-brained story that men in top hats with mirrors had committed the crime. One can imagine that such a strange story would have mystified the police, but if they had carried out any sort of investigation, they would have found where the tale came from, and realised that Beattie was saying the first thing that came into his head at the time.

The officer questioning Beattie, Detective Sergeant Mortimer, was not a pop fan. He did not know that, just before Beattie had gone out on the Friday, the night of the murder, men in top hats with mirrors—a pop group called Slade—had been on television. Beattie had seen them, and it had been one of the few visually memorable images that he had seen that evening. I have here a picture of the men in the top hats with mirrors—Slade, a top of the pops British pop group. Such a simple answer to an important question in the case against Beattie was an answer that any teenager could have given, but it completely foxed the officers on the case.

At 1.30 am, after about six hours of interrogation, Mortimer charged him with murder. Personalities now came into the case. Muncie liked to charge suspects himself, but a mere sergeant, who had been on the case for only a day, was stealing his thunder. At 5.30 am, having

[Mr. Jimmy Hood]

had no sleep, the lad was brought before the chief superintendent at the scene of the crime. Muncie was making sure—in fact, the stage was set for Muncie's biggest mistake.

Muncie was proud of his investigative technique, and often talked about it. His motto was "always alert". He had a golden rule that all his men were supposed to follow: if a suspect was apparently admitting to facts which could incriminate him, they should be repeated to an officer who was not in any way connected with the inquiry. That is a good and fair way of conducting an investigation—it is a pity that Chief Superintendent Muncie totally forgot about it when it came to nailing the murder on George Beattie.

What is more Beattie was ill when Muncie saw him, yet Muncie denied him a doctor for a further 16 hours. By then, Beattie had been awake for about 20 hours. He had already been charged, but here he was, at the scene of the crime, tired and poorly and being made to postulate what must have happened when the murder took place, to policemen who avidly took down his every word as gospel —except, of course, those sections which did not fit their theory. Of course, Beattie, although charged, had no solicitor present. What a botch-up of an investigation.

It got worse. Muncie asked the accused to retell his tale. Beattie tried to repeat his "guided tour", but he made several mistakes, on which Muncie should have pounced.

Beattie said that the knife found in the glen was the murder weapon. We must remember that most of the detectives on the case were of that opinion, but their boss knew that it was not correct. The forensic department later proved him right—there was no blood on that knife, so it was not the murder weapon. Muncie said nothing about Beattie's mistake.

Muncie should have probed for special knowledge. He did not. One fact which the police knew but which was still secret was the fact that the murderer had not taken Margaret's expensive engagement ring. Beattie did not know that. Indeed, he had no special knowledge. He knew nothing of the one item of Margaret's that was never found—her charm bracelet.

What about the fact that Beattie had described details of the clothes in the victim's suitcase? Muncie should certainly have spotted the mistakes that Beattie made about the clothing. He himself noticed that the clothes had not been exposed during the murder—so even the murderer could not have known the details that Beattie had blurted out under interrogation. When Muncie asked where the body had lain, Beattie did not know, even though Muncie had marked the spot on the *Daily Record* photograph.

Any reasonable person would have known that there was something wrong with the arrest, yet here was a police team that lacked simple liaison procedures, and operated without proper briefings. The men were working almost 24 hours a day. In such circumstances, people do not think straight, and officers can become desperate to write cases off.

No one heard of those circumstances during the trial, of course. In court, it seemed that police procedures were perfect, working hours magnificent, and venerable chief superintendents infallible. But no one is infallible. Although Chief Superintendent Muncie was the famous detective who had spotted the teeth marks that convicted Hay in the Biggar murder case, that sharpness was missing when he dealt with the forensic evidence in the Carluke case—because that evidence showed that Beattie was innocent.

Normally, Muncie would have spotted that, in the Carluke murder, the meal that the victim had eaten before leaving home was not in her stomach. That was vital evidence, because it meant that she must have died at about 11 pm, not 8 pm. But the police missed the significance—just one mistake among many.

There is a lurking doubt that the police had smelt that there was something wrong with their case. In Scotland solicitors have the right to question prosecution witnesses such as police before the trial—but Muncie was "too busy" to give a precognition. Perhaps that was because he could not afford to be questioned before the trial.

Picture him in his office as he prepared the case for trial. He knew that at least he had one "ace"—a blood spot on a tissue handkerchief found in Beattie's pocket. The blood grouping was not Beattie's and matched the victim's in two main—though common—groups. Unfortunately, that evidence had been handled in a nonchalant manner. There were no proper notes of its discovery, and no protective measures were taken—poor police work again.

Some of the other scientific evidence was worrying. There was blood under the victim's fingernails—she had scratched her attacker. Although the scratches would have shown on the murderer for days after the murder, Beattie had no scratches. And they could not match the blood under the victim's nails to Beattie.

A greater problem was the blood on the stones under the victim's head. It was clearly hers, but the sub-grouping in the blood did not match the blood found on Beattie's tissue handkerchief. How can Chief Superintendent Muncie have felt when that news came through? His "ace" was gone. There was only one solution. It would have to be claimed that that blood had no relevance to the guilt of the accused. The snag with that argument was that it was a lie—because the blood actually proved that Beattie's guilt did not exist.

So what could be done to lessen the damage that that evidence did to the police case? Quite simply, the evidence was suppressed. We can only guess who suppressed it—but the fact is that it never appeared in the documents presented either to the defence or to the court.

I can tell the House about that evidence now only because the information was let slip after the trial in a letter to Beattie's lawyer from the deputy Crown agent in the Crown Office:

"Mr. Eynon did not examine stones found under the body of the deceased. Another forensic scientist did".

I understand that Mr. Eynon was the forensic scientist during the case. We now know, after the trial, that a separate secret forensic test was taken on the blood.

He goes on:

"They were stained with human blood of group O MN. He also analysed a sample of the deceased's blood which was of group O MN."

There was no O MN in the sample on the tissue, and that proved conclusively that Beattie was innocent.

The report was withheld from the court and from the defence, and it must be asked why. It is new evidence; it was not given to the court, so it should be examined closely now. The letter also said:

"I am not prepared to make a copy of his report available to you."

As George Beattie's Member of Parliament, I am asking for a copy of the report, because I want to see what is in it.

As for the problem of the wrong knife that Beattie had chosen as the murder weapon, Muncie glossed it over in court with an adroit answer. He said that the most important thing was blood. Let me refresh the Minister's memory; it was the same knife that Muncie had eliminated because there was no blood on it.

What was the chief superintendent thinking? Of course he knew that defence lawyers tend to stick by their written questions. Beattie's lawyer had no questions about the blood on the knife as none had been found. The court did not take Muncie up on the matter. It let it lie, so that the jury was left with the impression that there had been blood on the knife and that it was the murder weapon.

The kindest thing we can say about Chief Superintendent Muncie and this incident is that he must have momentarily forgotten that the knife he was describing to the jury was the very weapon that he had eliminated at the start of the case because it had no blood on it at all. It would not be nice to say that an officer with such a high reputation deliberately lied to make sure that his last case ended in a conviction, ensuring him a 100 per cent. success record before he left for one of the highest ranking police jobs in Scotland. However, we might excuse George Beattie in his cell in Saughton prison tonight for thinking that.

Those are not matters that Scottish Office Ministers would take seriously when reviewing Beattie's case, but they might well say that it was a matter for an internal inquiry into the police force concerned.

At the bottom of the case is the motive. The police totally failed to come up with any motive for George Beattie to commit the crime, but there is motive for the police to pursue Beattie. The whole case went wrong because of their botched investigation.

Beattie is not in Saughton prison because he committed a murder in Carluke in 1973. He is in gaol because, if the truth comes out, too many reputations will suffer in high places. That is the sad truth; it is something that the Scottish Office and its Ministers must stand up to and answer. They have hidden behind the many complications, twists and turns in the story of George Beattie. They must now realise that the guilty verdict was a miscarriage of justice.

As we sit in this place, proud of its history and its democratic processes, the conviction of George Beattie is a blight on us all. George Beattie is innocent, and the Minister must realise that everyone knows it. He seeks justice from Parliament and the Secretary of State for Scotland. In the name of justice and decency, I ask that George Beattie be given that justice.

12.17 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): In the eight minutes which remain available to me I cannot cover all the points I should like to have raised if I had the full 15 minutes. However, I can tell the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) that his remarks tonight will be closely examined and carefully studied. I appreciate that he has deeply held views about the conviction of George Beattie, and in responding I shall deal first with the conviction and then with the life sentence aspects.

George Beattie was convicted of murder on 4 October 1973 in the High Court in Glasgow. The victim was a 23-year-old woman from Carluke. She had been stabbed repeatedly on the body and robbed. Doubts have been raised subsequently about the safety of this conviction. I know that various submissions have been made to previous Secretaries of State about Mr. Beattie's case.

In particular, a former Member of Parliament, the late Dame Judith Hart, who was Mr. Beattie's constituency Member of Parliament at the time, wrote to the then Secretary of State in November 1983. She drew to his attention the findings of the BBC production team who had studied Mr. Beattie's case in preparing a programme in the "Rough Justice" television series, which had been shown earlier that month. Having examined these points carefully, the Secretary of State replied in April 1984 explaining that there were not sufficient grounds for him to intervene in the case.

Dame Judith wrote to the Secretary of State again in May 1984, enclosing a paper written by the BBC producer involved, seeking to challenge the Secretary of State's decision. It dealt with several forensic matters and, again, it was carefully examined. The forensic evidence in the case was re-examined by an independent expert with no previous involvement in the case—the director of the medico-legal department at Liege university, Belgium. His report confirmed the validity of the techniques that were used by the forensic scientists in the case and showed that the BBC material did not materially affect the consideration of the case.

The Secretary of State replied to Dame Judith in June 1985, explaining that there remained a lack of any grounds on which he could properly intervene in the case.

I know that there has been some renewed interest in the conviction recently, on the part of the hon. Gentleman and others. I realise that this may have been intensified by Mr. Beattie's recall to custody. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman met my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Scottish Office, to discuss the case on 4 November 1992. I can confirm that at present there is no petition before the Secretary of State on Mr. Beattie's behalf. However, if the hon. Gentleman, or anyone else, has new evidence or other considerations of substance in the case which have not previously been examined, he or she should submit a petition to the Secretary of State as soon as possible.

The hon. Gentleman has expressed concern that a forensic report on blood found at the scene of the murder has not been made available. The report was referred to in a letter of 25 June 1974 from the Solicitor-General of the time to the late Dame Judith Hart, who was Mr. Beattie's Member. The report classified the victim's blood and blood found on stones beneath her head as group O,MN, and accordingly did no more than suggest that the blood on the stones was that of the victim. The then Solicitor-General also confirmed to Dame Judith that no blood was found near the scene of the crime belonging to a group other than Beattie's or the victim's.

Indeed, both the blood on the stones and the blood on the tissues was found on testing to be similar to the victim's blood. The confusion arose because of a misconception that the victim's blood could not have been both group O,MN and group O rhesus D positive. In fact, it could be both. I stress that both tests were carried out on blood taken from the same sample of the victim's blood.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

I have noted the hon. Gentleman's criticisms of the police conduct of the inquiry into the murder of Margaret McGlouchlan. As I have said, his words will be carefully considered and examined. If he has evidence in support of his allegations, and sources, he should arrange to submit them to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who will ensure that they are closely examined.

It may be helpful if I explain the review procedures for life sentence prisoners in Scotland. The mandatory life sentence exists to protect the public from those who have committed the extremely serious crime of murder. Our system of law provides safeguards and hurdles so that the very greatest care and consideration precedes the release of any life prisoner. The hon. Gentleman said on 19 October:

"Prisons are there to contain people who threaten our community, but people should not be imprisoned unless they deserve it."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 272.]

If, at any time, a life licensee's behaviour gives cause for concern, the Parole Board may recommend his recall to custody, whereupon my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may revoke a life licence. A person recalled to custody is informed of the reasons for his return to prison and has the right to make written representations.

In Mr. Beattie's case, there were several reviews. He had regular local and home leaves, which with the exception of one, when he returned to the hostel late, passed without incident. He was released on life licence in August 1986. He was supervised in the community first in Scotland and later——

Mr. Hood *rose*——

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have only two more minutes. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman. I have had only a brief——

Mr. Hood: I wish to be helpful to the Minister.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I have only two more minutes.

Mr. Hood: Will the Minister make available to me the report to which he has referred that deals with the blood that was found under the victim's head, which was found to be O,MN? Will he provide that report, provision of which has so far been refused?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall certainly make inquiries on that point in co-operation with the Lord Advocate, after which I shall write.

The key point about the blood is that the forensic report of 20 July 1973, which was a production at the trial, indicated that the blood stains on the paper tissues and the blood sample from the victim were group O rhesus D positive and that the blood sample from Mr. Beattie was group A rhesus D positive.

As I said, he was released on licence. He returned to Scotland in August 1990, when he took up residence with his mother and began working as a bus driver. The first incident related to his conviction for breach of the peace which gave rise to concern. He was alleged to have confronted and verbally abused the female driver of a car which was obstructing the bus he was driving. Following that, there was a breakdown in relations with his female supervising officer.

The final incident took place on 23 April 1992, when Mr. Beattie visited the office of his new male supervising officer. He was alleged to have kicked the officer on that occasion. He was subsequently convicted of breach of the peace and admonished. That incident was the culmination of what was considered to be a worrying pattern——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock on Wednesday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-five minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 4 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETARY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 11 March.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 11 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL FINANCE

Excise Duty

1. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the impact on British industry of rates of excise duty.

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Anthony Nelson): My right hon. Friend has received a considerable number of representations on Budget matters.

Mr. Pike: Recognising the importance of the Scotch whisky industry to jobs in Scotland and to the balance of payments, may I ask what the Government will do to ensure that that industry does not continue to be greatly disadvantaged by comparison with the wine industry? Are we going to allow it to be destroyed?

Mr. Nelson: The Government acknowledge the importance of that industry and representations have been made to my right hon. Friend by the Scotch whisky industry and associations. I cannot, of course, anticipate anything that might be in the Budget.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend accept that the premium exporting industry of Scotland is the Scotch whisky industry, which delivers £1·7 billion worth of exports every year? Given the 10 per cent. reduction in United Kingdom sales of Scotch whisky in recent times, is not there good reason carefully to examine the relationship between the excise duties on whisky and those on other drinks?

Mr. Nelson: My hon. Friend is a tireless champion of the industry. The point that he has made today has been well made by the industry to my right hon. Friend and I am sure that he will take full account of those representations.

Dr. Marek: Does the Minister accept that there is a vast haemorrhage of money from the Treasury because of the distortions caused by cross-border trade as a result of differing excise duties in the United Kingdom and in mainland Europe? Can he accept as Government policy a process of harmonisation of those rates to get rid of the cross-border distortions?

Mr. Nelson: The Government always accepted that a cost would be involved in the single market, but it involves opportunities as well. The Government have undoubtedly taken measures to reduce yield loss through cross-border trading, including the deployment of about 130 Customs and Excise officers to inland surveillance, and from the beginning of this year there will be a considerably increased number of prosecutions as a result of arrests.

Trade Barriers

2. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will make a statement on the economic cost of trade barriers.

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Michael Portillo): Trade barriers impose unnecessary costs on both industry and consumers and also deprive them of choice.

They impede the efficiency of the economy by distorting market mechanisms. A rapid, comprehensive solution to the GATT round would provide a non-inflationary stimulus to the world economy.

Mr. Oppenheim: Of all the huge burden of protected industries that bear down on us all as a result of EC or national actions, is not the one whose extra costs particularly hit poorer people—because they spend proportionately more of their incomes on it—and which causes immense injury to virtually every other industry in the country—because they all have to pay over the odds for its product—and which severely damages the environment and people's health—because it produces excessive carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide emissions —*[Interruption.]* I can see that Opposition Members finally recognise that I am referring to the coal industry. There is absolutely no excuse to extend the many decades of protection that the coal industry has enjoyed at the expense of virtually every other industry in the country.

Mr. Portillo: The Government must and will take seriously the commitments on the environment that they made at Rio. We must, of course, be extremely wary of driving up the price of electricity to our industrial users, because that would put them at a competitive disadvantage. About 90 per cent. of the coal used in power stations in this country is produced in the United Kingdom. The problem of the coal industry is not predominantly one of import penetration: it is one of collapse of demand.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the Minister agree that although trade barriers damage our balance of payments, much worse damage has resulted from neglect of our industrial base? Does he agree with the Prime Minister that that was a great mistake? What will the right hon. Gentleman do to rebuild our manufacturing industry?

Mr. Portillo: During the 1980s, manufacturing productivity in Britain grew faster than in any other country in the G7, the group of the richest countries. Our manufacturing production reached its record position in 1990. During the 1980s we stabilised our share of world trade after a decade in which it had been falling. These are all remarkable achievements. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer went further in the autumn statement in providing some encouragement to manufacturing industry—for instance, by the scrapping of car tax and by providing extra money to the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

Mr. Merchant: Does my right hon. Friend agree that an important aspect of free trade is the free movement of capital? Does he agree also that the European Community should not do anything to discourage foreign investment in Europe, bearing in mind the large amount of such investment that is coming to Britain, such as Toyota in Derbyshire and Nissan in Sunderland?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Toyota is investing £700 million at Burnaston, near Derby. Nissan is expected to invest £885 million by the end of the year and to create 4,600 jobs in Sunderland. There is also the Toyota investment that is taking place at Shotton, which will provide 300 jobs. The plant will produce 200,000 engines a year and represents an investment of £140 million. The free movement of capital is important and the conditions that make Britain such an attractive place for inward investment must be sustained.

House Prices

3. **Mr. Gerrard:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on current house prices in London and the south east.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I am pleased to say that recent developments are consistent with the view expressed by my right hon. Friend in the autumn statement that the housing market should start to recover this year.

Mr. Gerrard: Is the Minister aware that in east London three out of every five people who have bought houses in the past four years have a mortgage that is greater than the current price of their houses and that across Greater London nearly 40 per cent. of those who are in mortgage arrears have a mortgage that is at least £10,000 more than the value of their property? Does he accept that that is the inevitable result of a rundown economy with mass unemployment? When can householders expect to see sufficient recovery for their house values to be restored?

Mr. Dorrell: I recognise that at the end of 1992 there was a welcome decline in the rate of repossessions as a result of the action that the Government took at the end of 1991 to make it easier for people who encountered mortgage difficulties to stay in their houses. I welcome the words of Mr. Michael Jones, the president of the National Association of Estate Agents. Referring to a survey that that organisation had conducted, he said:

"There can be no doubt that recovery is now underway."

I also welcome the fact that the chief executive of Bryant Homes said that, in his view, there was a

"strong pattern of recovery showing through."

Those are things which I hoped Opposition Members would welcome.

Mr. Evennett: Will my hon. Friend confirm that mortgage rates are the lowest for a generation? That is a real achievement and one which should help house buyers in London and Greater London to deal with their problems. Does my hon. Friend agree that there were considerably fewer repossessions last year than in the past few years? Those are real achievements. We should start talking up the economy, not down.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He is especially right to draw attention to the benefits to the housing market that stem from the fact that mortgage rates are now at their lowest level for 25 years. They are not academic benefits. They are manifesting themselves in the sales of house builders in the first two months of this year, which are 20 per cent. up on the same period last year. The number of people viewing new houses on building sites is 15 per cent. up on the same period last year. I hope that those who are willing to look will welcome these signs of recovery.

Mr. Darling: Does the Minister accept that the signs of recovery are fragile and that one of the biggest obstacles to recovery in the housing market is unemployment and fear of unemployment, which is likely to subsist for some considerable time? Does he further accept that one of the problems in the housing market in London and the

south-east of England is poor transport links? Can he confirm that crossrail and the other rail projects announced by the Chancellor in the autumn statement are to be axed?

Mr. Dorrell: The biggest threat to recovery in the housing market is the activities of those who appear to have a vested interest in continuing to talk down the housing market. There is clear evidence for those who are willing to look at the signs that the market is beginning to recover. I should have hoped that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen would welcome that.

Mr. Ottaway: Does my hon. Friend agree that the mortgage interest rate has a large impact on house prices? There are many low-cost mortgages on the market, but is he aware that many building societies make it a condition of borrowing that the borrower takes out the lender's in-house insurance policy? That tends to be prohibitively expensive and distorts the advantage that may be gained by low interest rates. Will my hon. Friend investigate that practice?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend makes an important point and I share his commitment to ensuring that all aspects of the housing market work efficiently to the benefit of the consumer of housing—the owner-occupier.

Trade Deficit

4. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further steps he intends to take to reduce the balance of trade deficit.

Mr. Portillo: Our traders are helped by low inflation, which is now at its lowest level for 25 years and below the European Community average. Our competitiveness has improved. Our annual unit wage costs are not rising. By contrast, they are rising by over 9 per cent. in Germany and in Japan. We have announced extra support for ECGD to help exporters.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Minister admit that the forecast trade deficit is likely to be about £15·5 billion? What a pathetic bunch this lot of Ministers are. Most of them come from the belly of the banking establishment, yet they have got Britain in hock. Who does the Minister blame for this mess? Does he, like St. John on the road to Maastricht, blame Lady Thatcher, or is he tied to her apronstrings? If he wants to alter Britain's balance of payments deficit, why does not he save £600 million by stopping the importation of coal, starting to export coal and saving the 31 pits? If he does that, he will turn the balance of payment deficits round.

Mr. Portillo: I had a feeling that the hon. Gentleman might mention my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher. I know that he misses her greatly in this place. They were a great double act in their day. But the hon. Gentleman really should not be so pessimistic. We predict an increase in competitiveness for Britain of about 16 per cent. in 1993. That is made up of the lower exchange rate and, in particular, our very good performance on unit wage costs. As I pointed out earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), only a small proportion of coal is imported—about 10 per cent. of what is used in power stations. That is not the problem. The problem is the collapse in demand.

Sir Peter Tapsell: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a significant proportion of imports into Britain is tied to production by the subsidiaries of foreign companies manufacturing in Britain and that we should increase the amount of our direct investment overseas, as distinct from stock market investment, so that we can increase the extent of our tied exports?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend must be right, at least in the short term. But I hope that, as companies establish themselves in Britain and as their investment reaches maturity, an increasing amount of their sourcing will be done from the United Kingdom. I heartily agree with my hon. Friend that in our overseas portfolio we want a good balance between investment in manufacturing and services and investment in stock markets abroad. There should be a balance of all those elements and of others as well.

Mr. Andrew Smith: British shipping contributes a net £2·3 billion a year to our balance of payments and a further net £1·5 billion in related services, but every month, as a consequence of the Government's failure to act to enable it to compete fairly with overseas operators, major lines are ceasing to trade, ships are being registered under the flags of other countries and British crews are being replaced and are losing their jobs. Will the Government urgently introduce measures to assist the competitiveness of the industry, before this vital part of our maritime heritage and of our economy is destroyed and our balance of payments plunged still further into deficit?

Mr. Portillo: The shipping industry is important to the British economy. Despite the gloom that was evinced by the hon. Gentleman, the Government have taken a number of steps to help the industry, which has been in a position to respond to the needs of national defence when it has been required to do so. At this stage, it would be unwise for me to say anything that might appear to prejudice the Budget.

Value Added Tax

5. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many companies were registered for VAT in 1979 and at the most recent available date.

Mr. Dorrell: At the end of 1979, 1·3 million businesses were registered for VAT. The latest figure available on a comparable basis is for the end of 1991, when the figure was 1·7 million businesses.

Mr. Coombs: Does my hon. Friend agree that those figures show the resilience and remarkable entrepreneurial vitality of British industry? Rover has not only experienced a significant increase in sales recently, but has shown a remarkably flexible attitude to its work force. In the past six weeks, shop-floor workers have sold no fewer than 3,000 cars. Is not such dynamism in stark contrast to the purveyors of doom and gloom on the Opposition Benches, who glory in talking down British industry?

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, first, to draw attention to figures published today by the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, which record that in the past three months motor sales were up by 7 per cent. on the previous three months and up by 16 per cent. on the same period last year and, secondly, to the fact that the

mix of policies that the Government have pursued means that 31 per cent. more businesses are now registered and active than when we took office in 1979.

Mr. Milburn: What is the Minister's message to the 4,737 firms in the north-east that were driven out of business last year as a result of his policies? Does he recognise that the initiative and hard work of people who run small businesses have been betrayed by his Government's broken promise of an economic recovery? When will he act to unlock the skills, potential and enterprise of British people instead of laying them to waste?

Mr. Dorrell: Every insolvency is a tragedy for those involved. We clearly want to avoid that and to create circumstances in which the number of insolvencies is reduced. I should have hoped that, in presenting a balanced picture, the hon. Gentleman might at least pause to reflect that even in 1991, which was a year of business difficulty, substantially more businesses were created in Britain than in any year when the Labour party was in power in the 1970s.

Mr. Butcher: May I persuade my hon. Friend to seek a special derogation from Brussels to raise the VAT threshold to £100,000, as the collection of VAT from a large number of small companies raises a small sum and incurs huge costs, whereas collecting from the bigger companies raises the bulk of the money at a small cost? This would do much for job creation at a time when we are looking for optimistic signs and recovery.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend makes another interesting Budget representation. He has less than a fortnight to wait and see whether it will be acted on.

6. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the VAT burden that charities face.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has received a great number of representations on behalf of charities, as is normal before every Budget.

Mr. Tipping: In view of the strength of public concern reflected in the letters in Ministers' and hon. Members' postbags about the burden of value added tax on the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and other charities that perform services that would otherwise fall on public authorities, will the Minister give urgent consideration to ways of lifting that tax on voluntary effort?

Mr. Nelson: Representing a coastal constituency myself, I am very conscious of the vital role and valour of the RNLI, but it already receives special tax treatment through zero rates on a number of purchases, including lifeboats and carriage equipment, and on the construction, repair and maintenance of slipways. That special treatment is worth about £3 million a year to the RNLI. As the hon. Gentleman will understand, I cannot, of course, comment further on any representations made before the Budget.

Sir John Hannam: In receiving representations from the various charitable organisations about their VAT, has my hon. Friend taken on board the fact that, in providing valuable services across a range of activities, local authorities and commercial companies are able to recover VAT, whereas charities are not? Will he therefore consider the proposal for a VAT refund system for the services that they provide?

Mr. Nelson: All representations are carefully considered before the Budget. Charities pay VAT on approximately one third of their expenditure, whereas the public pay it on about half. I do not think that my hon. Friend would want me to comment further today.

Mr. Wigley: May I support the pleas made on behalf of the lifeboat and disablement charities? The fact that charities pay VAT on a third of their expenditure is no excuse for not considering alleviating the entirety of the burden on such organisations. Will the Minister bear in mind the fact that this time of financial difficulty, when it is hard to raise money, is absolutely the wrong time for the burden of taxation to be carried by organisations that will probably bear more than their share of public responsibilities, especially when community care develops from April? Please will the Minister reconsider?

Mr. Nelson: I hear clearly what the hon. Gentleman says, but perhaps he will allow me to make the point that since the Government took office, a series of measures have been introduced to encourage charitable giving and charities now enjoy tax relief in excess of £1 billion a year. We have a creditable record, but we shall consider representations.

Inflation

7. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the effects of his policy on the rate of inflation.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Norman Lamont): Our policies have brought the rate of inflation down to its lowest level for 25 years. Keeping underlying inflation inside the range of 1 to 4 per cent. over the remainder of this Parliament will represent a decisive breakthrough to permanently lower inflation.

Mr. Robertson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the lowest inflation rate for a quarter of a century is the best possible news for the future of the British economy? Will he give the House an assurance that the Government will take no risks with the future of inflation, and that they will do all they can to ensure that it stays low and stable and in its target range?

Mr. Lamont: I can give my hon. Friend that assurance. We fought a long battle to get inflation down, criticised all the time by the Labour party. We believe unambiguously that low inflation is very important for our trade, for manufacturing and for confidence for businesses. The fact that we have a level of inflation below the average of the European Community augurs extremely well for this country.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Now that the Chancellor appears to be accepting some credit for the present inflation rate, will he accept responsibility for the years of high inflation, low growth and mass unemployment, and apologise to the British people for those policies?

Mr. Lamont: If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the 1980s, he must at least be aware that we reduced inflation decisively during the 1980s. Bringing it down created jobs

and employment. Low inflation has been one of the Government's major achievements and we intend to stick with our policy of keeping it down.

Mr. Rowe: My right hon. Friend will be aware that a number of us receive many letters from old-age pensioners and others on fixed incomes who are anxious about low interest rates. Will he bear it in mind that it is easy to explain to them that low inflation is their friend, provided that the costs of utilities such as railways and water do not rise well beyond the rate of inflation? Will he continue to bear down on those organisations to ensure that they keep their prices under control?

Mr. Lamont: As my hon. Friend knows, prices in individual utilities are matters for the regulator, but I agree that low inflation matters more to pensioners, savers and people on fixed incomes than to any other section of the community. We intend to honour our promises and pledges to them, and to keep inflation down. My hon. Friend made an interesting point about the level of interest rates and I note carefully what he said. Even in the Treasury our postbag on interest rates, which is always large, is now split at least 50:50 in terms of higher rather than lower interest rates.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Does not every expert forecast say that during the year, despite everything that the Chancellor says, inflation and unemployment will rise? Given that the right hon. Gentleman promised that he would not devalue, and then did, promised that he would balance the budget, and then did not, and promised a recovery that has never arrived, has not his only consistent policy on inflation been his view that unemployment is a "price well worth paying"? Will he tell us whether he believes that unemployment will rise during the coming year—yes or no?

Mr. Lamont: I am extremely interested to hear that at long last the hon. Gentleman has mentioned the word "inflation". He has made speech after speech, but has never before mentioned that word. That is not surprising, because none of his policies has ever shown the slightest appreciation of the problem of inflation, and the hon. Gentleman has never shown the slightest interest in bringing inflation down. He refers—[HON. MEMBERS: "Answer the question."] If the Opposition would stop shouting me down, I would answer the hon. Gentleman's question. He referred to the depreciation of sterling and the effect that that would have on the underlying rate of inflation. He will know that the depreciation has not led to an increase in inflation. We believe that the outlook in that respect is better than many commentators have said. The hon. Gentleman also referred to unemployment. I shall make it crystal clear to him that I want to see unemployment reduced—of course I do—but that I totally despise his attitude when he comes to the House with no recognition of the fact that unemployment on the continent of Europe, in the European Community, is forecast to rise beyond 11 per cent. Can the hon. Gentleman name one major country in which unemployment has not increased during the past year? There is not one.

Retail Prices

8. **Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in retail prices during the month of January.

Mr. Portillo: Between December and January the retail prices index fell by 0·9 per cent. This was the largest monthly fall recorded for nearly 35 years.

Mr. Stephen: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Does he accept that what the economy of this country needs is low inflation, low taxes, moderate interest rates and a competitive exchange rate? It does not need a policy of raiding our constituents' pockets and spending their money, which is the only policy ever offered by the Opposition parties.

Mr. Portillo: The list of features with which my hon. Friend began his supplementary question is absolutely right. I would add that the productivity performance of manufacturing industry is extremely encouraging and that our competitiveness is shown not only in the exchange rate but in our performance on wage unit costs. Those are very encouraging features. My hon. Friend is also right to say that the Labour party simply does not understand such matters and still looks to spend more money and to raise taxes considerably, believing that recovery can somehow be stimulated by higher spending. That is a delusion.

Ms. Harman: Does the Chief Secretary not realise that what this country also needs is investment in training and in industry? Does he not understand the anger that there will be in this country at the fact that millions of pounds of European Community money earmarked for Britain, for training and investment in the regions, will not come here because the Government simply have not applied for it?

Mr. Portillo: We seem to be rather a long way from the subject of prices. Nevertheless, I have no reason to believe that there will be any difficulty in providing the public expenditure cover that the European Community wants for European regional development fund grants. We have made pledges, we made provision in the public expenditure survey, and I imagine that Sir John Kerr will be in a position to write to Mr. Millan in the near future. I see no difficulty whatsoever.

Mr. Sykes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that we have heard more than the usual amount of nonsense from the little Clintons opposite—*[Interruption.]*—especially from Bolsover's answer to Hillary Clinton? If Opposition Members were really interested in helping the jobless they would abandon inflationary policies such as the minimum wage and the social chapter.

Mr. Portillo: On the last part of his question, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is difficult to imagine policies that would be more destructive of jobs than are the minimum wage and the social chapter. The President of the United States has recognised the need to address his country's deficit. In the context of the United Kingdom, so far as I remember, that has never been recognised by the Labour party.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Does the Minister subscribe to the old economic adage that any fool can get inflation down if he is prepared to tolerate a high enough level of unemployment?

Mr. Portillo: I do not know whether that is meant to explain why the last Labour Government produced inflation at a rate of 27 per cent. If so, it is a rather poor explanation.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the remarkable figure for retail price inflation, combined with the very low figure for unit wage costs and the over-capacity in the property market and much of industry, suggests that we really are on top of inflation now and emphasises the importance of ensuring that, over the next two years, interest rates will be determined by domestic monetary conditions and not by reference to economies that are not in step with our own?

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has made very clear the range of conditions that he will examine to determine the appropriate level of interest rates. My hon. Friend is right to say that there are significant disinflationary pressures in the economy. For example, the money supply—M4—is below the monitoring range at present and we have seen falling house prices. However, I should caution my hon. Friend that it is always easy, when inflation has been brought down, to believe that it does not matter. Inflation does matter, not least from the point of view of our competitiveness.

Value Added Tax

9. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about VAT being imposed on food, books and newspapers.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has received a number of representations, and these will be considered very carefully in the period leading up to the Budget. However, I am sure that the House will appreciate that it would be inappropriate for me to comment further at this stage.

Mr. Winnick: Inappropriate or otherwise, may I ask whether the Minister is aware that there would be no possible justification for a Tory tax on food, which would hit particularly hard the people in low-income households —the very people who have suffered enough under the Tory Administration? Would not the imposition of VAT on books and magazines break a clear pledge given by Ministers over the past few years?

Mr. Nelson: I cannot comment on what may or may not be in the Budget, but I can comment on an extraordinary statement last July by the Labour economic spokesman Lord Desai, who proposed that VAT should be applied at the full rate to all zero-rated items. Do the Opposition repudiate that?

Sir Terence Higgins: Is it not the case that the original structure of VAT, with a single positive rate and a zero rate for items of particular importance to families on low incomes, has stood the test of time? It would be wrong to alter that for short-term, revenue-raising purposes, particularly as narrowing the range of zero rating would result in greater pressure, especially from the European Community, to get rid of zero rating altogether.

Mr. Nelson: I hear very well what my right hon. Friend says. I am sure that he shares my view that the Government secured a very important agreement with the European Commission and other member states, which allowed for the retention of our current zero rates.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I am sure that the whole House has noticed that the Government's pledges about not raising or extending the range of VAT have got more feeble as the Budget gets closer. Is the Minister aware that extending the VAT base to all currently zero-rated categories would add £7 per week to the budget of the poorest 10 per cent. of households, which is 7 per cent. of their average household income? Will the Minister give the House an assurance that whatever measures the Government bring forward will take into account the interests of the poor and that they will not pass on to the poorest 10 per cent. of households the deficit reduction measures that they are contemplating?

Mr. Nelson: What the hon. Gentleman has just complained about is exactly what his noble Friend proposed on behalf of the Labour party last year. I can give him the assurance that all these matters are carefully taken into account in assessing the Budget strategy.

Retail Sales

10. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to visit Hendon South to meet the Golders Green chamber of commerce to discuss the level of retail sales.

Mr. Lamont: I have no plans at present to visit the Golders Green chamber of commerce. To the best of my knowledge, I have received no such invitation. If I did so, however, I should be pleased to tell the chamber of commerce that the volume of retail sales in the three months to January has never been higher.

Mr. Marshall: Welcome as the increase in retail sales is, does my right hon. Friend accept that the level of consumer confidence is still a fragile plant which could be anaesthetised for some months if VAT were imposed on food?

Mr. Lamont: I have noted my hon. Friend's comment.

Value Added Tax

11. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received on the imposition of VAT.

Mr. Nelson: Many representations have been received, and these will be considered in the run-up to the Budget.

Mr. Kirkwood: Has the Minister received any representations from the bloodstock industry about VAT? Is he aware of the absurdity of the situation in which it is profitable to take horses to Ireland, leave them on the tarmac for 30 minutes to complete the transaction at the lower rates of VAT there and then fly them back to this country? Is he further aware that the French Government have managed to get a derogation from the VAT regime to protect their bloodstock industry? When will the Government do the same for the United Kingdom industry?

Mr. Nelson: I have taken careful note of what the hon. Gentleman says. He will be aware that negotiations are taking place between Customs and Excise and the Jockey Club. I hope that they will come to a satisfactory conclusion.

Mr. Alan Howarth: Does my hon. Friend accept that the Government have acted imaginatively over the years to ease the burden of tax on charities? Will he bear in mind, however, that the beneficial effects of those changes will be significantly undone if charities have to pay VAT on items that are currently zero rated? Will he listen sympathetically and respond positively to the calls to relieve charities of their existing burden of VAT?

Mr. Nelson: The Government always listen sympathetically on such matters.

12. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total yield from VAT in 1978-79; and what is the expected total yield for 1992-93 in cash and in 1992-93 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: The yield from VAT in 1978-79 was £4·8 billion, which is worth £13·2 billion at today's prices. The expected yield for the current year is £37·7 billion.

Mr. Hall: The House will be aware that since 1979 the Tory Government have put up VAT from 8 to 17·5 per cent. and have increased the number of goods covered by VAT 14 times. That has added to the increased tax burden. Will the Minister confirm that if VAT is put on books, periodicals and newspapers, it will be in breach of Tory party election pledges, but in line with Tory actions in government?

Mr. Dorrell: I do not intend to say anything about what might happen in my right hon. Friend's Budget, but it is passing strange that the Government should be under attack for pursuing precisely the policy that they always said they would pursue—that within a constant tax burden they would shift the burden from income to expenditure. That is what we said we would do, and that is what we have done.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Will my hon. Friend, although enjoying purdah at the moment, note that although special representations are being made about VAT, he and his right hon. Friend the Chancellor should maintain maximum flexibility? Many of us believe that broader-based VAT is the right way forward, with special categories, especially for the poor, which could be targeted in other ways. We want the maximum flexibility and we must bear in mind that tightening the tax regime at present is the right policy, given our much looser monetary conditions.

Mr. Dorrell: I will not put up a vigorous defence against my hon. Friend's suggestion that Front-Bench Members should retain room for flexibility.

Public Expenditure Reviews

13. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what criteria were used to select the four Government Departments to be included in the public expenditure reviews.

Mr. Portillo: The Government will be reviewing the expenditure of every Department before the end of this Parliament. The four Departments chosen to start the review process are among the largest and the fastest growing.

Mr. Prentice: Is there not a case, notwithstanding "Options for Change", for including defence in the public expenditure reviews, especially since the *Financial Times* tells us that this economically battered nation spends 4 per cent. of its gross domestic product on defence, compared with 3·4 per cent. by France and 2·2 per cent. by Germany? Is there not a case for the Government paying heed to the injunctions of the *Financial Times?*

Mr. Portillo: "Options for Change" was a very important review indeed, and I do not think that it is yet timely to go back over that. The hon. Gentleman would be making a reasonable point if he were to say that we should always keep our defence spending under review and in line with our world commitments. On the other hand, as the hon. Gentleman is a former leader of the Fulham and Hammersmith council, which doubled the rates overnight, I am loth to take lectures on public spending from him.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mrs. Jackson: Does the Prime Minister recall telling Parliament in 1989:

"I take my own share of responsibility . . . It is not something I seek to heap upon my predecessor"?

Is he today going to blame Baroness Thatcher for the disastrous damage done to manufacturing industry while he was Chancellor of the Exchequer?

The Prime Minister: As it happens, my right hon. and noble Friend did more to help British industry than the Labour party has ever done. If the hon. Lady would like an illustration of that, in the 1980s the number of manufacturing companies rose from 144,000 to 165,000. I will provide the hon. Lady with a long list of other improvements, should she wish to have it.

Q2. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rowe: In every year of this Conservative Government the Home Office has paid for and researched very carefully experiments using voluntary organisations and others to rehabilitate young offenders. That research has consistently demonstrated a very much better rate of recovery than any other method used. *[Interruption.]* Every time these experiments have shown——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have not yet heard a question from the hon. Gentleman. I have heard statements, but no question. I now need a question.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. Friend aware that every time these experiments are shown to be a success the Home Office funding is withdrawn? Will he make certain that, when such experiments are shown to be successful, Government expenditure is maintained to enable them to continue?

The Prime Minister: The Home Office always monitors the performance of the projects that it funds to ensure the value for money and efficiency of those projects. Where the projects are efficient, there is a possibility of extending funding for longer than the three-year period.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Prime Minister explain what he meant when he said that he was a minority in his predecessor's Administration? Is it not deeply revealing about the Prime Minister that, having run out of excuses for the abject failure of his Government's economic policies, he is now trying to pin the blame on his predecessor, in whose Government he was responsible for economic policy both as Chief Secretary and as Chancellor of the Exchequer?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is very predictable. He is also misled yet again by newspaper reports, having not read the transcript of the interview. He really should give up reading newspapers; I recommend it to him. If he had read the source material, he would have read that the question put to me was that the idea got about in the 1980s that making things was not so important. It was not my view, not my right hon. and noble Friend's view, and not the view of the then Government.

Mr. John Smith: The Prime Minister surely cannot complain about being misrepresented in interviews that he himself gives. Is he aware that in that interview he complained about what he called an inheritance of 15 per cent. interest rates and 11 per cent. inflation? Who does he think was Chancellor of the Exchequer in the preceding years? If we are to make sense of the Prime Minister, does he not understand that he means that he inherited them from himself?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is being very slow. I shall explain the whole matter to him again. I suggest that he reads the transcript of the interview. As I explained to him a moment ago, I disagreed with the view put to me by the interviewer, as would my right hon. and noble Friend have disagreed with it. So far as interest rates are concerned, I was referring to the legacy of the recession that we are curing and which has now hit every other nation in Europe.

Mr. John Smith: Can the right hon. Gentleman explain why a Chancellor of the Exchequer has nothing to do with a recession that occurs in his period of office? Since he has been Prime Minister for more than two years, and since the right hon. and noble Lady is no longer here, why are we still losing 25,000 jobs every month in manufacturing industry and £136 billion in investment under his Administration? It has nothing to do with anyone else.

The Prime Minister: What the right hon. and learned Gentleman utterly fails to realise—which is why he remains on the Opposition Benches—is that what needs to be done to put this country in the right position for growth is what we have done. The last time there was 1·7 per cent. inflation was more than 25 years ago. Interest rates are now lower than anywhere else in the European Community.

If the right hon. and learned Gentleman were more aware of the position of manufacturing, he would know that exports are up on manufacturing. Capital spending on manufacturing is up. Compared with 10 years ago, there is exceptional growth in engineering, chemicals and other manufacturing. When will the right hon. and learned Gentleman stop talking this country down and start talking it up?

Sir Dudley Smith: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his sensible policies on the Bosnia-Herzegovina civil war are amply confirmed by current events?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my hon. Friend is entirely right about that. The important matter in the Bosnian war is to give every support one can to the peace talks in New York. They are crucial. They are the only realistic way of achieving real peace, and I very much welcome the Muslim agreement to a document on the cessation of hostilities. There still remains great difficulty in getting agreement on the map, but it is essential that all parties remain at those negotiations and negotiate seriously until we have a satisfactory agreement and the end of this bitter and nasty conflict.

Q3. **Mr. Leighton:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Leighton: No one has spoken more graphically and poignantly about the evils of unemployment than the Prime Minister. Does he recall talking about what he called his "dole hell", searching for work every day when he was unemployed for 12 months as a 19-year-old in Brixton? Is he aware that in 1962 there was one unemployed person for each vacancy but now there are hundreds? Does he agree that a full employment society is a good society, but that the mass unemployment society over which he is presiding is an evil society? Now that he is Prime Minister, what steps will he take to put the aim of full employment at the top of his agenda?

The Prime Minister: The first essentials for making sure that we have a society that has full employment are low inflation, low interest rates and the right supply side policy for growth. The right way to make sure that we have skills is to put in place the training programmes that we have put in place, each one of which has been opposed by the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. Friend agree with Lord Prior's comments yesterday that the conditions are now in place for British manufacturing exporters to perform better? Will he join me in congratulating the firms in north Hertfordshire that are doing just that, in particular Lucas CEL of Hitchin which is launching its new export product today?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I am certainly happy to give my support to those particular projects. We have remarkable opportunities in front of us at the present time, as we find that we are hugely competitive in terms of the cuts in costs that we have seen in the past few years. We need to ensure that on

this occasion, even though we have captured export markets, we do not surrender those for the returning home market. We need to keep the domestic market and continue to press ahead with further export markets.

Q4. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Does the Prime Minister agree that the people and businesses of the south-west and especially Cornwall—the poorest county in the whole of the country—cannot be expected to pay the highest water and electricity prices? What hope can he offer those people of a fair deal, given that he has already told them that he will give them no special help?

The Prime Minister: I think that if the hon. Gentleman looks he will find that the water prices to which he refers are similar in other counties to those in the west country. There is a substantial need to improve the water quality and supply in the west country and also, not least because of the importance of the tourist industry, to improve the bathing waters and other tourist facilities. That is a significant reason for the present level of water charges.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Is my right hon. Friend aware that more than 300 Members of this House and of the other place recently attended an exhibition of obscene material that had been seized under the Obscene Publications Act 1959? Is he aware that Members were deeply shocked by what they saw and believe that the Obscene Publications Act needs urgent review? Will he accept the invitation that I have written to him to view the material privately so that he may reach his own informed conclusion about what action needs to be taken to clean up this free market in filth?

The Prime Minister: I have had a report of the particular material to which my hon. Friend refers. I am aware of the nature of it and how offensive it will be to most Members of this House and most people in this country. I have asked my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage to consider what options exist for taking action against it.

Q5. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Purchase: Does the Prime Minister realise that the people of the west midlands, once the workshop of the world but where now more than a quarter of a million people have been made unemployed in the past 13 years, will take no comfort from the fact that he appears to have gone along with the loss of their jobs? Does he think that they will understand him a little less and condemn him a little more?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will be aware of the historic importance of the west midlands to manufacturing. He has neglected to mention the assistance in the autumn statement on capital allowances, car tax —very important to the west midlands—and maintained capital expenditure. He has utterly overlooked the lead that this country has taken in seeking a solution to the general agreement on tariffs and trade round, which is vital to the west midlands. He has also overlooked the primary importance of the motor car industry, which was in disarray some years ago under his party's Government but is now a net exporter and increasingly profitable.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Has my right hon. Friend noticed that new car registrations are up 16 per cent. compared with a year ago? Is that not good news? Does he not think it strange that every time the economic news is good, the faces opposite get longer? Is it not time the Opposition stopped talking this country down?

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about that, and it is a point which I have made in recent days. The increase in car registration is welcome news. It is a continuing trend over recent months. The only people who benefit from talking Britain down are our competitors. I hope that that is understood by every right hon. and hon. Member.

Q6. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Prime Minister is right to give priority to the manufacturing sector of business in Britain, particularly small businesses, but what does he have in mind? Is he prepared to reduce the burden of rates which apply particularly to small businesses? Is he prepared, for instance, to allow small businesses to add statutory interest to bills that are overdue for undue periods of time? There is a long list of tangible things that the Prime Minister could do to give real physical expression to the words that he uttered recently in his interview in the national press. What tangible, concrete things has he in mind?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman had been listening a few moments ago, I listed a number of them to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, North-East (Mr. Purchase). As to other matters, he must wait and see.

Honours

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the honours system and to announce some changes, which have been approved by Her Majesty the Queen.

The award of honours for service and achievement has been a valued part of British life for centuries. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Would the Prime Minister allow me? Would those Members leaving the Chamber do so quietly? We want to continue with our business here.

The Prime Minister: Let me begin again for those hon. Members who may not have heard what I was saying in the hubbub.

With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the honours system and to announce some changes which have been approved by Her Majesty the Queen.

The award of honours for service and achievement has been a valued part of British life for centuries. It is the means by which we, as a nation, can show our respect and gratitude to those who have contributed most to our national life. Acts of courage, lives of sacrifice, inventiveness, generosity and commitment to others are formally recognised and acknowledged. It is rooted in our history, and given special value by the close personal attention which the sovereign has given to it. To retain its valued role in our national life, the honours system must, from time to time, be reviewed and renewed.

The present system has remained largely unchanged for 70 years, despite huge changes in national life. I have therefore been discussing with Her Majesty some changes that will, I believe, enjoy widespread support.

I wish to start by clarifying the circumstances in which honours awards should be made.

First, honours should be awarded on merit, for exceptional achievement or exceptional service, over and above that which normally might be expected. Secondly, there should be different levels of award to reflect different levels of achievement. Thirdly, awards should not be automatic and follow simply as a result of doing a particular job. Fourthly, awards should place more emphasis on voluntary service.

I therefore propose to end the recommendation of honours where they are given solely by seniority or on appointment. In future, with one exception I shall turn to in a moment, there should be no assumption that honours will automatically be attached to particular posts in either the public or the private sector.

Public servants and office holders will, of course, still be eligible to receive honours, and many will qualify on merit, but the assumption that a particular post automatically carries an honour will end. Instead, awards will be open —on merit—to a wider range of individuals.

I intend that these principles should be applied throughout the civil service and the rest of the public sector, and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence concur in respect of the foreign service and the armed forces.

I also intend the same principles to apply in the private sector. Many people give generously of their time, energy and expertise to help their fellow citizens, and a more flexible system can take greater account of such contributions. While heads of particular organisations can no longer expect an honour just because their predecessor received one, they will, of course, continue to be eligible if their achievement and their service to the community merit it. I propose to continue making recommendations for political service, and I shall apply the same principles there, too.

I mentioned earlier one exception. The independence of the judiciary is fundamental to our legal system. Awards of honours should not be thought to depend upon approval of legal judgments. For that reason, I believe that High Court judges should continue to receive the traditional honour of a knighthood on appointment. This practice has preserved the independence of the Bench from the exercise of patronage for two centuries, and I believe it should continue.

I should now like to turn to specific awards where I have some changes to announce. The largest proportion by far of current awards are MBEs and BEMs, mainly for service to local communities. The distinction between service meriting the award of an MBE and that meriting a British Empire Medal has become increasingly tenuous. It can no longer be sustained. I therefore intend in future to increase the number of recommendations for MBEs and to discontinue recommending awards of BEMs. I should make it clear that this change will not affect existing holders of the BEM, who will of course retain their medals. These are, rightly, highly treasured personal possessions.

The change will also apply to the lists recommended by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. The Governments of those Commonwealth countries that recommend British Empire Medals in their own lists have been informed of these proposals.

To end a similar distinction in the Imperial Service Order, I shall no longer make recommendations for awards of the ISO. Those considered to merit the award will instead receive OBEs. The associated Imperial Service Medal is a long-service medal awarded on retirement and will continue.

At present, those receiving the BEM do not attend a royal investiture. For the future, the Queen has graciously agreed to increase the number of investitures both at Buckingham palace and elsewhere in the country. This will enable the increased numbers receiving MBEs to attend a royal investiture, though the Queen will not be able to conduct all investitures herself. I realise, however, that some may value a local presentation which gives greater opportunity for friends and family to mark the occasion. Her Majesty has, therefore, agreed that those awarded MBEs, OBEs or CBEs may receive their honour from their lord lieutenant if they prefer. The choice will rest entirely with the recipient.

I turn now to military gallantry awards. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is separately conducting a review, and will be announcing his conclusions shortly. But there is one change I can announce today. At present, except for the Victoria Cross, awards for gallantry are linked to the rank of the recipient. Officers are eligable to receive crosses or equivalent decorations, but non-commissioned ranks are eligible only for medals. The time has come to end this distinction. In

future, the level of award will be determined by the part played by the individuals concerned, and the courage they displayed, without regard to their rank.

At present, the numbers and distribution of honours are reviewed every five years. However, I have requested that the next examination of these numbers be brought forward to the summer of this year. I have asked the review, first, to take greater account of the desirability of recognising work in the voluntary sector and service to the community; secondly, to look at the proportion of awards to state servants to ensure that it appropriately reflects changes in the role and the size of the home civil service, the diplomatic service and the armed forces.

Finally, I believe that the means of nomination for honours should be more widely known and more open. It is, at present, too haphazard. Nomination forms, setting out the type of information needed, have therefore been prepared. I will make sure that the forms are readily available both to members of the public and particularly to voluntary bodies and charities. I hope that this change will help increase the recognition of merit of all kinds.

The honours system has been with us for centuries and has a continuing and valued role to play in British life. I strongly support it, but it is right that it should periodically be examined. The changes that I have announced today mean that exceptional service or achievement will be more widely recognised; that greater importance will be given to voluntary service; that automatic honours will end; that the distinction between ranks in military operational gallantry awards will cease; that the bulk of honours in the half-yearly lists will be of a single, undifferentiated award, the MBE; that all recipients of honours will be invited to a royal investiture.

I shall report to the House in due course on the review of the numbers and distribution of honours, and I shall consider at that time whether further changes are needed.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): There will be widespread acceptance of the abolition of the distinction of rank in certain civilian awards and in decorations for gallantry. I think that we would all agree that the criteria for the award of an honour should be exceptional achievement or service to the public benefit. I hope that the Prime Minister will be able to demonstrate that principle in practice.

Can the right hon. Gentleman say why it has been decided to retain the notion of an Order of the British Empire? Might it not at least have been changed to Commonwealth? Why has he retained political honours —the part of the system on which he was least forthcoming in his statement? Why do Conservative Governments—and only Conservative Governments—wish to use the honours system as a form of patronage for their political supporters? I observe that there is nothing haphazard about the award of political honours to the Conservative party. Has he no shame about the way in which eight Conservative Members of Parliament regularly and automatically collect knighthoods each year, for no other reason than that they are supporters of the ruling political party? If he really means what he says about stopping automatic honours, could he not usefully start with Conservative Members of Parliament?

Does the Prime Minister not think that the connection between awards of honours and donations by companies to the Conservative party is shoddy misuse of a system set up to recognise public service? If he really wants to reform the honours system properly, ought he not to start by distinguishing political and financial support for the Conservative party from genuine public service?

Finally, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the honours system will be judged by our public for its capacity to recognise the many acts of service and sacrifice made by ordinary citizens, and the more that that can be done, the more it will be found to be acceptable?

The Prime Minister: I made that last point entirely clear in my statement a few moments go. I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for his welcome for the principles of review and I am delighted that he was prepared to express them in the House. His specific questions included, first, why we should retain the title of the "British Empire". I accept that it is resonant of a previous era, but it has an historical pedigree, is respected and familiar, and I see no advantage or purpose in changing it. I believe that it is more important to review the criteria and eligibility for awards than to seek new names for them. There is also the practical point that the Order of the British Empire is still in use in a number of Commonwealth countries.

As for political honours, I see no reason why those who work in support of a political party should be excluded from recognition. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows, that view is also held privately by many people in his party, who would be only too grateful if he would recommend them. It means a great deal to people who work to sustain our democratic system and who might otherwise receive no recognition. I have no intention of abandoning the awarding of honours for political service.

As for donations by companies, the right hon. and learned Gentleman should be aware of the activities of the Political Honours Scrutiny Committee. If he were, he would not have made the ill-judged remarks that he has just made.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Anyone with military experience knows that the heroism of the bravest and best usually goes unrecognised. In his examination of military honours, will my right hon. Friend urge the Defence Secretary to retain the Distinguished Service Order, which ensures recognition for officers who have demonstrated not only heroism under fire but an aptitude for command, thus combining both attributes effectively in Her Majesty's service?

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that that is being taken into account by my right hon. and learned Friend in his review. He intends that awards for gallantry should no longer artificially distinguish between officers, who receive crosses, and other ranks, who receive medals.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Is the Prime Minister aware that his statement is welcome but disappointingly timid? Is that it, or does he have some other reforms in prospect? If this is the beginning and end of it, many people will regard him as having missed an opportunity and failed to live up to some of his own rhetoric about fundamentally reforming the system.

May I make two suggestions? Since the right hon. Gentleman has gone halfway towards simplifying the system, why not go the whole way and have a single honour with different grades and classifications to match

[Mr. Paddy Ashdown]

different merits? Secondly, and perhaps more important, why does not the Prime Minister choose this occasion to remove the honours system from the powers of patronage of the Prime Minister and the political system at large, and vest it instead in an independent commission, free of political influence and, from time to time, political abuse?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there is stringent independent scrutiny of all honours before they are approved.

It has never been my view that we should fundamentally reform the system. It has been my view that we needed to bring it up to date so that it retains its credibility.

The right hon. Gentleman's concept of a single honour, no doubt with classes 1, 2, 3 and 4, is not one which would appeal to me.

As to whether there will be further changes, I said in my statement that at the end of the review in the summer I would consider, without commitment, whether further changes were necessary.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down. These interruptions are just a waste of time.

Sir Peter Tapsell: As an example, perhaps, of the somewhat haphazard way in which routine political honours are conferred, may I ask my right hon. Friend to whom the nomination papers that he has mentioned are to be posted? May I suggest that they should be sent to the lords lieutenant and not to Members of Parliament?

The Prime Minister: I think that my hon. Friend understates his own distinction. The nomination papers can be submitted either to the lords lieutenant or to the honours section of 10 Downing street.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Prime Minister aware that the history of the honours system is, as he says, very old, established by William the Conqueror when he took us into the common market in 1066? Baronetcies were introduced by James I and sold for £1,095 to raise money to send troops to Ulster. Is he further aware that Lloyd-George sold honours absolutely ruthlessly to boost his own political funds; and that the system suffers from two serious defects, neither of which he has turned his mind to at all?

The first is that the honours system is based on what a person is when he does something, not on what he does. That is to say, a senior civil servant may still get a high honour, but a sub-postmistress who has fought off bandits and been seriously wounded will get the lowest order of all. That is a defect to which the right hon. Gentleman has not addressed himself because he still clings to the Order of the British Empire, one of the most recent honours, which was established in 1915 shortly before the British empire disappeared.

The second defect of the honours system is that the Crown lends to the Prime Minister and party leaders its authority to give political patronage. That patronage is ruthlessly used for political purposes. The most obvious example is that the past 10 Prime Ministers put more than 800 people in another place, whereas it takes the entire British electorate to——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have to say that this is all very interesting but that it is time for questions. There are many hon. Members to be called on both sides of the House.

Mr. Benn: The patronage system is corrupt—everybody knows that—and it should be brought to an end. The system makes the country a laughing stock when people are bedecked in ribbons that have no meaning. In some instances, those who wear them are having old political debts repaid for reasons that are very disreputable.

The Prime Minister: I am surprised at what the right hon. Gentleman has to say. I doubt whether the first Lord Stansgate was corrupted by his honour in earlier days. William the Conqueror brought the common market here rather than the other way round. At least Lloyd-George did not use lavender paper—the right hon. Gentleman made no mention of that.

On the right hon. Gentleman's two substantial points, I have addressed myself directly to the first defect that he set out. I hope that, on re-reading my statement, he will see that. He removed himself from the other place to here, but there are many of us here who believe that the other place has an important role to play in our constitution—not least those on his Front Bench, who continue to nominate people to serve in it.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): May I support my right hon. Friend in the general thrust of his proposals—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear".] I have not finished. Will he advise more senior colleagues than myself on the Government Benches whether they are more or less likely to get an honour, whatever the strong views that they may hold, if they support or oppose the Maastricht treaty? What honour does my right hon. Friend have in mind for the federalists of the Liberal party, who have gone into a coalition with him in an attempt to get that abhorrent treaty on the statute book? Would it be the Order of Delors Grand Cross?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his ingenuity if, perhaps, on little else. I am always delighted to have his support, if for no other reason than its novelty.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): My colleagues and I welcome the general thrust of the Prime Minister's statement, but we wish to know whether it will be an open system or an opaque one. Those of us who have been asked to support nominations have been amazed at those who happen to come up and those who are missed. The right hon. Gentleman talked about judges. If a Northern Ireland judge dissociates himself from patronage, will the right hon. Gentleman refuse him a knighthood? Has the right hon. Gentleman consulted his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland with a view to restoring the Order of St. Patrick?

The Prime Minister: I have not consulted my right hon. and learned Friend on that matter. I have sought to make the system more open and nominations easier. I suspect that there are many who merit an award who are never nominated because of the present haphazard system. I

hope that the changes that I have announced today will improve the system and make it more likely that those who merit an award will be honoured in future.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): First, I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his splendid and long-overdue statement. I think that the House will agree that far too much evil and badness is portrayed in the newspapers and the media. The fact that my right hon. Friend is to pick out good works and voluntary work in the community as being worthy of honour should be supported by the House. But will my right hon. Friend look at the process, not just the awards? I think that the House would like a more open system so that we know how it works.

The Prime Minister: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of giving greater emphasis to the voluntary and the charitable sectors and, as I said in my statement, that is what I propose to do. As I said a moment ago, I am seeking to make the system more open and I believe that the changes that I have announced today will help do so.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Is not the best way to preserve the independence of the judiciary to give none of them knighthoods rather than all of them knighthoods? Does not the same apply to journalists? While we are on the subject, can the Prime Minister throw any light on the award of a damehood to a Miss Sue Tinson, an associate editor of Independent Television News and a former editor of "News at Ten", in the resignation honours of his predecessor?

The Prime Minister: What the hon. Gentleman has to say is certainly an option. It is one which, no doubt, I and, in many years to come, my successors will consider.

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): One of my most prized possessions is the Territorial Decoration for service in Her Majesty's Reserve forces. My father holds the Territorial Medal because, despite distinguished service during the war, and commissioned at that, he missed the TD by one day because of the cessation of hostilities. There is great camaraderie in the Reserve forces and it would be widely welcomed if my right hon. Friend could tell the House today that there will be a universal award for the Reserve forces in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: That is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to consider in his review. He has heard what my hon. Friend has had to say and I am sure that he will consider it.

Mr. Peter Mandelson (Hartlepool): Does the Prime Minister agree that the least legitimate and least supported feature of the honours system is the occasional award of hereditary peerages? Will that practice cease forthwith?

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to award hereditary peerages.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a general belief that people in their 70s and 80s are almost no longer eligible for recognition? Is he further aware that many of them are not recognised either because they have been overlooked or because they have done further work? Will he give an assurance that age is no bar to the recognition of merit?

The Prime Minister: Yes, my hon. Friend touches upon an important point and I can give him that assurance.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Prime Minister aware that I have been a member of the National Union of Mineworkers for 40-odd years, and that is all I need? I am proud of the fact that that union has served me well. I do not need any of these honours and badges that are talked about. I remind the Prime Minister that no honours system can work in practice. At this very moment there will be people out there doing sterling deeds who will go unnoticed, whose deeds will not get into the public domain and whose names will never reach the ears of politicians, Prime Ministers or Queens of the realm. That is why the wheat can never be sorted from the chaff.

The Prime Minister has admitted today, has he not, that Tory Members of Parliament will become knights, that people will enter the House of Lords, that those newspaper owners who help him out at the general election will finish up in the House of Lords or with knighthoods and that those companies that provide the Tory party with vast sums of money will also get their honours? The whole thing is a sham and it is time that it was ended.

The Prime Minister: I made the point some time ago about people who go unnoticed. We shall open up the nomination system so that, if he wishes, the hon. Gentleman will be able to nominate people in his constituency or elsewhere who may have served the community but who may otherwise not have been noticed. That is one of the purposes of the changes. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not let his constituents down in that respect. He is right to be proud of his long membership of the National Union of Mineworkers, but there is no compulsion to accept honours. Many people deserve them. It gives great pleasure to them and their families to see society honour them for the work that they have done. It is a shame that the hon. Gentleman cannot be open-minded enough to see that other people may welcome and benefit from the system. He should open his closed mind.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Those who are involved in voluntary service will be delighted by my right hon. Friend's statement today. The allocation of awards to the voluntary military services was based on past numbers available. Any adjustments that are made, therefore, should ensure that more people from the voluntary sector —I can send him names of individuals who have given more than 40 years' service in the voluntary military service—are rewarded properly with an honour than under the present system.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend should be reassured that that is my intention.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): Will the Prime Minister confirm that since 1979 more than 100 Tory Members have been given knighthoods? One of the explanations for the way in which his predecessor was tipped over was that so many Tory Members had knighthoods that they felt they had nothing to lose. Will he further confirm that the chairmen and managing directors of the top 200 companies are twice as likely to receive honours if they donate money to the Tory party? Does he acknowledge that if the honours system had any justification, which many Labour Members doubt, it would be as a system to reward those who are not

[Mr. Bruce Grocott]

rewarded by the normal means in this country? The current system gives to those who have it already, and it is time that we reversed the balance.

The Prime Minister: I disagree with almost everything that the hon. Gentleman said. I thought that I detected in his early remarks the smell of sour grapes. On awards to business men, I refer again to the independent scrutiny of the Honours Scrutiny Committee and of the independent committees that recommend honours.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): My right hon. Friend's statement is very welcome, especially for its greater recognition of voluntary service. Will he closely consider the regional distribution of honours, particularly in medicine, because many achievements in the north have been insufficiently recognised?

The Prime Minister: I am certainly happy to examine that. We need to bear in mind as we do so that we must not introduce a quota system. We must ensure that honours are distributed on merit.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): A Conservative Member took me to one side the other day to explain the process by which he had become a knight. As the story developed, it transpired that it was a consolation prize for not getting what he really wanted —[HON. MEMBERS: "Name him."] It is tempting, but I shall resist the temptation. Does the Prime Minister understand that the system of political honour corrupts and degrades the honours system, and that it is no good saying that he will continue to give honours to people who deserve them, because the currency of honour has been devalued by that system of political honour? It is a dishonourable system.

The Prime Minister: That is copper-plated nonsense. As for the discussion to which the hon. Gentleman referred, clearly he must have asked how to receive an honour.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): My right hon. Friend's announcement on the abolition of the distinction between the MBE and the BEM is entirely welcome. Will he amplify a little on what he has in mind for gallantry awards? Would it not be true to say that the Military Cross awarded for gallantry and the Military Medal for gallantry may not be the same decoration but that they are an equivalent decoration? That is understood by the armed forces whose members receive them. Is my right hon. Friend entirely satisfied that the case has been made for abolishing the distinction between them?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the early part of his remarks. I examined the substantive part of his question very carefully with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, and it is our view and that of the armed forces chiefs that it right to abolish the distinction.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does not the Prime Minister understand that the retention of the honours system maintains the division of a class-ridden society which he is supposed to be dedicated to ending? Is not the reality behind the retention of political honours—the most corrupt section—that he cannot afford to get rid of them because of the Tory party's cash crisis? Is it not outrageous that the one section of honours which is to operate automatically is that of the judiciary, whose members are among the best paid of all public servants? Is it not enough that people should do a good job at work or in the community? Should not that be sufficient reward, without people crawling around the Prime Minister for some recognition?

The Prime Minister: For many people the answer is yes, it is sufficient reward. That is why the voluntary system in honours is so important—no one is required to accept an honour. Honours give great pleasure and satisfaction, and I believe that it is right for society generally to show its respect for people who have made a particular contribution. That is why we have the voluntary system; it is why the honours system has survived for so long and is so widely supported.

I understand what lies behind the hon. Gentleman's rejection of the honours system, but I suggest that he is wrong. There are millions of people in this country who perform voluntary or other services and who are delighted to see those among their number who have performed particular service receive recognition of that fact.

Mr. David Tredinnick (Bosworth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, despite the amalgamation of the BEM and the MBE, there will still be more people worthy of an MBE than there are awards currently available? Does he accept that with the new emphasis on voluntary service it might perhaps be better to establish a new mark of recognition with that particular flavour?

The Prime Minister: I considered whether one should produce a new mark of recognition, especially for voluntary service, but I decided on balance that it was better not to introduce a new honour into the system, but, at an appropriate level, to use the honours system that already exists. I agree with my hon. Friend that many people in the voluntary sector, and beyond, merit an honour. What I hope will come about as a result of today's statement is that more of the best of those people will be nominated for and then receive such an honour.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As the son of a man awarded the Military Medal for what I think was called bravery in the field, I welcome the sweeping away of the invidious distinction that has existed for far too long between officers and the men and women in the military ranks. To judge by the content of the right hon. Gentleman's statement, may we assume that in respect of civil honours we shall never again see the award of a knighthood to an editor who, in his newspaper, slavishly follows this disreputable Government?

The Prime Minister: I am tempted to say, "Name them." On the hon. Gentleman's first point, I am grateful for his remarks about the removal of the distinction in gallantry awards. I think that it will be very widely welcomed in the armed forces and far beyond them.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Is the Prime Minister aware that today's announcement will go down very well in rural areas such as Norfolk where often the chairman of the parish council will receive an MBE but the clerk, who is equally hard-working, will receive a BEM? That is clearly archaic and a cause of confusion. Can the Prime Minister confirm that all those people who were awarded a BEM in the past will almost certainly get an MBE in the future?

The Prime Minister: Yes, it is the intention that people who in the past would have been recommended for a British Empire Medal will in future be recommended for an MBE.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Does the Prime Minister not agree that in the specific case of the House, the privilege of membership is in itself a great and sufficient reward? Can the Prime Minister explain why, if the system has not been corrupted, every hack, obedient, lickspittle Tory Member has received his knighthood—[HON. MEMBERS: "Withdraw."]

Madam Speaker: Order. Mr. Flynn, that is an unparliamentary word, which I cannot accept. *[Interruption.]* Order. I know that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw that word.

Mr. Flynn: I withdraw the word "lickspittle", Madam Speaker. I ask the Prime Minister to explain why all the obedient, mediocre, talentless Tory Members of Parliament who have gone obediently through the Lobbies for years have had their knighthoods, whereas other Tory Members who have served their time have not had the offer. Those who have not had knighthoods are people of talent, but they also happen to be people of independent mind.

The Prime Minister: I am not sure whether my honourable and independent minded Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) would agree with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that long service deserves special recognition in the case of the Labour party? Will he recommend the creation of a new order, perhaps called the Pink Elephant, with several classes and an hereditary aspect, for persons recommended by the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the Liberal Democrats?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend gives me a further matter to consider after the review in the summer.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. On that note, we shall move on. I have a short statement to make to the House.

Librarian (Retirement)

4.11 pm

Madam Speaker: I have received a letter from the Librarian, indicating his wish to retire later this year. I shall arrange for the text of his letter to be embodied in the *Official Report*. Mr. Dermot Englefield has worked in the Library for nearly 40 years. Before his appointment as Librarian in 1991, he held the post of Deputy Librarian for 15 years.

That whole period has been a period of major expansion and great technical change in the range of services provided by the Library and the demands made on the staff who work there. I am sure that hon. Members in all parts of the House will join me in thanking Mr. Englefield for his long and distinguished service to the House, and at the same time express our appreciation of the assistance provided to us by the Library as a whole.

Mr. Englefield will retire on 30 September this year, and I have appointed Miss Jennifer Tanfield, the Deputy Librarian, to succeed him. I call the Leader of the House.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that statement, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall come to the hon. Gentleman in a moment. I feel that the Leader of the House should speak first.

Mr. Skinner: I wanted to know whether you were going to make an announcement about the cleaners, too, Madam Speaker, in our classless society.

Madam Speaker: Order. Leader of the House.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have no doubt, Madam Speaker, that you are right in your expectation that the whole House will want to join in the tribute that you have paid to Mr. Englefield and in your thanks to the staff of the Library under his leadership. As you have said, his long period as Deputy Librarian and then Librarian has spanned nearly 17 years of extensive developments in the Library, during which the range and quality of its services have come to be valued ever more highly year by year by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Englefield's own contribution has gained him the respect not only of his own staff and of colleagues throughout the Departments of the House but undoubtedly of hon. Members and their staff, who have been helped so much by his efforts. We are all grateful to him and wish him well for a long and happy retirement.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I associate myself with your remarks, Madam Speaker, and with those of the Leader of the House. Mr. Englefield has an immensely impressive record of service to the House and —perhaps more important to us and to him—through us, to our constituents. After all, it is on behalf of our constituents that his services and those of the Library are supplied. He has performed a crucial role in the expansion and development of the Library service. The more the Library staff are able to support and help us, the more we are able to assist our constituents. On behalf of my party, I extend thanks to Mr. Englefield and best wishes for his retirement.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): On behalf of the members of my party and all the staff of the House who work for us, I express thanks not just to the Librarian on his forthcoming retirement but, through him, to the entire team that he so ably heads. We may complain about the food in this place, and we may complain from time to time about the accommodation, but the one place where we get phenomenally good service at all hours of the day and night, often at very short notice, is the Library of the House. In terms of value for money in the public service, we could find nothing better. We also welcome the appointment that you, Madam Speaker, have made. Perhaps it is a precursor, an indication, that, at last, women will have a chance of securing many more of the top jobs.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): As Chairman of the Information Select Committee, I should like to associate myself and the Committee with the warm tributes that have been paid to Dermot Englefield for his long service to the House—latterly as Deputy Librarian and, subsequently, Librarian. In my experience, if there is any issue on which all hon. Members agree it is that the expertise, patience and helpfulness of the Library staff are unparalleled. Dermot Englefield merits our appreciation for the quiet but effective way in which he has ensured that the Library copes so well with the ever-increasing demands that we make in seeking access to information, often at very short notice. In offering Mr. Englefield every good wish for his retirement, we also congratulate and look forward to working with his successor, Miss Jennifer Tanfield, who in September will become only the 12th Librarian of the House of Commons since 1818.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I, too, pay tribute to Mr. Englefield, his successor and the entire Library staff. Members of Parliament, in their constituency and other work, are enormously assisted by the Library staff. But the Library contributes something more: to some extent it evens out the enormous imbalance between Treasury-Bench Members, with their command of information, advice and all the intellectual resources of the civil service, and other hon. Members. This is thanks in no small measure to the Library staff, to whom I am most grateful.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Unlike the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), I shall not pass any judgment on the food. Nor can I pass any judgment on the strong drink, as I do not partake of it. I associate myself with your remarks, Madam Speaker, and with those of my House of Commons colleagues. Ruskin said that when one moves among books one can move among kings. In our Library we certainly move among kings. A kingly service is provided by the Librarian, and I wish him the best for his retirement.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): On behalf of my party, I pay tribute to Mr. Englefield and express good wishes for his retirement. He has not only provided Members with a service but worked in the wider field of the emerging democracies whose representatives have come here to discover something of the way in which the House of Commons operates. Knowing your own perception, Madam Speaker, I welcome your appointment of Mr. Englefield's successor. I know that the appointment was made on merit, and not simply on the basis of sex.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): On behalf of the three constitutional nationalist parties, I extend thanks to the retiring Librarian for all his work over the years and extend very good wishes to his successor, knowing full well that the objectivity, speed, efficiency and courtesy with which all our inquiries are dealt will continue. We are all very grateful.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): May I add to the tributes already paid to Mr. Englefield on his retirement? Having served with Mr. Englefield for nine of the 15 years during which he was Deputy Librarian and I was Chairman of the Library Sub-Committee, I came to admire enormously the loyalty and service that he dedicated to his predecessor, Dr. Menhennet, during the 15 years in which he was Librarian. It was a remarkable team.

In due course, the part that Dermot Englefield played in the development of the Derby Gate Research Library will come to be known. That Library is now the jewel in the crown of the Libraries in the Commonwealth Parliaments —if not in the world Parliaments. I express my thanks for what Mr. Englefield has achieved and I welcome his successor, Miss Tanfield, for whom I have formed the highest regard while Chairman of the Sub-Committee.

Mr. Skinner: Would you agree, Madam Speaker, that there is a certain irony about the situation? There are 2,000 workers in this building, the real workers being outside the Chamber. Many are paid small amounts. Some have worked for 20, 30 or 40 years in the Cafeteria, mopping up the floors when we come in at 6 or 7 am. Yet on the day that the Prime Minister has been talking about levelling out honours, a special tribute is paid to somebody in the Library, no doubt deservedly, whereas there are no commendations for all the people who have to keep the wheels going in here.

I should have thought that, on this day, the tribute should be coupled with tributes to the many others who have retired from this place after many years of service. In view of all the tributes paid to the Library, I make two points with which, I am sure, the retiring Librarian would agree. First, the Government must not privatise the Library and, secondly, they must not put VAT on reading matter.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): It was not long ago that a waitress in the Strangers Cafeteria was given not only a farewell party in the Speaker's apartments, but an honour. The staff of this place have not been forgotten.

I add my regards to Mr. Englefield for the wonderful Library service which he has built up over many years and which all Back-Bench Members use. The specialist staff in the Library spare no time or effort in ensuring they keep up to date with their various specialisms. We see them sitting during Question Times that involve them, listening, keeping ahead of us and keeping up to date. They are always there to give us information. I place on record on behalf of all Back-Bench Members my thanks to a man who can retire safe in the knowledge that he has built up a Library service second to none, with a Library staff second to none and with a successor who, I am sure, will be second to none.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is it not the case that if Members of the House of Commons were half as

efficient, half as competent and half as knowledgeable as the members of the Library staff, we should have better Governments and better Oppositions?

Following is the text of the letter:

Dear Madam Speaker

As agreed with your predecessor on my appointment as Librarian, I am, on retirement, placing my office at your disposal with effect from 1 July 1993. This will be nearly forty years after I joined the Library when some two dozen staff served 630 Members with neither a telephone in the Members' Library nor a photocopier in sight!

The changes, including technological changes, of the last four decades have greatly altered the job of being a Member of Parliament and hence the service they expect from their Library staff. It has been a stimulating lifework to be associated with these substantial developments—for the last 17 years as Deputy Librarian and Librarian.

The House of Commons remains essentially a small organisation for which to work and it is the friendships over the years, both with Members and with colleagues in the Library Department but also in other Departments of both Houses, which I have especially appreciated and which have given me such pleasure.

Yours sincerely
DERMOT ENGLEFIELD
Librarian

Business of the House

4.22 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week:

MONDAY 8 MARCH—European Communities (Amendment) Bill: progress in Committee, 15th day.

TUESDAY 9 MARCH—Opposition day, 10th allotted day: there will be a debate described as "The collapse of manufacturing industry and the rise of unemployment", on an Opposition motion.

Motion on the Public Lending Right (Increase of Limit) Order.

WEDNESDAY 10 MARCH—Until Seven o'clock, motion on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order.

Remaining stages of the Foreign Compensation (Amendment) Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion to take note of the annual report of the European Court of Auditors concerning the financial year 1991, together with the institutions' replies. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Motion on the Plymouth Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order.

THURSDAY 11 MARCH—European Communities (Amendment) Bill: progress in Committee, 16th day.

FRIDAY 12 MARCH—Private Members' motions.

MONDAY 15 MARCH—Second Reading of the Disability (Grants) Bill.

[Wednesday 10 March:
Relevant European Community documents—OJ C330 Vol. 35, Court of Auditors reports for 1991; Unnumbered, Budget for 1991: Council's discharge.
Relevant reports of the European Legislation Committee—HC 79-ix (1992-93); HC 79-xxi (1992-93).]

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the Leader of the House for that statement. I hope that he will find time for an early debate on the recently announced rise in prescription charges. It is, as I understand it, the biggest rise ever, at 13 per cent.—eight times the rate of inflation. It was outrageous that it was announced without a statement to the House. It would be even more outrageous if it passed without our having a chance to discuss it. So, as I say, I hope that he will find time for an early debate.

I remind the right hon. Gentleman that the defence estimates debate is still outstanding.

I hope—as I know do many hon. Members on both sides of the House—that he will look for an early statement on the issue of the coal industry. There are worrying rumours that a statement and the White Paper may not be available until after the Budget. That takes us very near the Easter recess, and I am sure that the Lord President will bear in mind that the present contracts run out on 1 April. That is a matter of great concern on all sides of the House, and I hope that he will look at it.

Can he also say when he expects primary legislation to be before the House with regard to the increase in the number of European constituencies? The Prime Minister announced this increase in December. We are well aware of the need for the Boundary Commission to ensure as wide consultation as possible on the review of the

[Mrs. Margaret Beckett]

boundaries, so clearly it is important for us to have early notice of how and when this legislation will be brought forward.

Finally, given that the right hon. Gentleman has announced an Opposition day for Tuesday, I very much hope, and indeed believe that the House will expect, that the Government will try to avoid scheduling statements on that day.

Mr. Newton: First, so far as prescription charges are concerned, I would simply make the point that it has been regular practice to make the annual announcement concerning prescription charges by way of a written answer, so I do not entirely accept the comments that the right hon. Lady made in that respect. She will, of course, have an appropriate opportunity to debate any necessary order in due course.

On the question of defence estimates, I cannot, I am afraid, add to what I told the right hon. Lady last week, when I said that I thought that the question of a debate was best left to discussion through the usual channels.

On coal, I note the right hon. Lady's request, but I am not in a position to add to what I have said on other occasions. Obviously, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade will want to make a statement as soon as he can do so, but I cannot at present predict precisely when that will be; nor, indeed, can I predict at this stage precisely when it will be appropriate to bring forward the legislation to which the right hon. Lady referred in respect of Euro-constituencies.

Lastly, I note the right hon. Lady's point about statements, but statements are sometimes appropriately made, and the House is often very anxious to hear them, at times which are not ideal for either the Government or the Opposition. We have to look at the whole range of considerations in determining when they should be made.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my hon. Friend realise that it is now a year since the Jopling report was published? Can we expect a statement from the Government either this week or, certainly, before the Budget on the exact action that they will take on this? The Jopling Committee only sat for the last Parliament and it will rest with the Procedure Committee to take action if we do not find that the Government are willing to proceed as soon as possible.

Mr. Newton: I am obviously very conscious of the close interest that my right hon. Friend has taken in these matters over a long period, and indeed of the importance of the role that he plays as Chairman of the Procedure Committee. I also very well understand the anxiety of hon. Members, on both sides of the House, I think, to see further progress made. As my right hon. Friend knows, and as the right hon. Lady the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) knows, discussions are proceeding through the usual channels and in various ways not a million miles removed from some with which my right hon. Friend is very familiar. It remains very much my hope to make progress at an early stage, but I cannot give my right hon. Friend the exact commitment that he seeks from me this afternoon.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement next week on the future of an Army personnel centre at Glasgow designated for 1995? Is he aware that rumours are circulating in Scotland that the centre is now to be placed in Stockport? Those rumours have been published in one of the national newspapers in Scotland. Given the prominence of written questions on this subject, does he accept that it would be preferable to have an early statement next week, because it is in no one's interest that there should be continued speculation on the matter when 1,000 jobs are at stake?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and learned Friend is giving the House further information about the matter this afternoon, to the effect that a number of representations have been received during the consultation period set out in his earlier statement. One of the representations has proposed an alternative building for the centre in Stockport at a purchase price to the Ministry of Defence of rather less than £4 million against a purchase price of about £20 million for the original proposal. My right hon. and learned Friend will be telling the House this afternoon that the representations are being considered but no decisions have been taken, and he will make a further statement on the Government's intentions as soon as possible.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to have a debate on the failure of the French Government to provide protection for British lorry drivers on cross-channel ferries, especially in view of the fact that, in the past 24 hours, a lorry carrying fish which was travelling from Poole to Cherbourg was badly damaged? The lorry driver could well go out of business as a result, and the contribution of the French police was to act as spectators, taking no action whatever.

Mr. Newton: Obviously, I am disturbed—as I think all hon. Members would be—by the account which my hon. Friend has just related. He will understand that I cannot promise a debate, but perhaps I can point to the fact that the Secretary of State for Transport is answering questions on Monday and the Foreign Secretary on Wednesday, so there may be opportunities for him to raise those matters at other times.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Would it be possible for the Secretary of State for Social Security to come to the House on Monday and explain why, during this very cold spell, not a single penny of cold weather payments has been paid during the week? It is a shabby state of affairs. I checked with the Library beforehand, and that is the position. Why are so many people who are retired or living on low incomes being penalised and punished day in and day out, especially after the Prime Minister's statement——

Madam Speaker: Order. I regret having to call the attention of the House once again at business questions to the fact that we are asking the Lord President about next week's business, not indulging in arguments across the Floor of the House. Next week's business statement deals with next week's business. Hon. Members are asking the Lord President to change the business or alter it in some way so that they may have their specific topics debated next week.

Mr. Winnick: I ask for a statement.

Mr. Newton: As it happens, I do not need to change the business for next week in order to provide the hon. Gentleman with the opportunity to make the point, which he clearly wants, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is answering questions on Monday week.

Mr. Colin Shepherd (Hereford): I draw the attention of my right hon. Friend to early-day motion 1452.

[That this House joins with all other parliaments throughout the Commonwealth in the observance of Commonwealth Day on Monday 8th March; recognises the Commonwealth theme for 1993 which concerns fundamental human values, protecting the rights of the individual and the promotion of good governance; and also notes that the United Kingdom Branch of the CPA continues to serve the interests of honourable Members by holding parliamentary conferences and seminars in London and by arranging parliamentary visits to and from Commonwealth countries.]

It relates to the commemoration of Commonwealth Day on Monday 8 March. I ask my right hon. Friend to make arrangements to have a debate specifically on the Commonwealth so that the remarkable contribution which it makes to the world in the development and sustenance of democracy in so many different countries can be discussed and properly appreciated therefrom.

Mr. Newton: I may have some difficulty in finding time for such a debate, especially with the Budget coming immediately after the period to which I have referred in my statement. Certainly I have a lot of sympathy with my hon. Friend's sentiments; indeed, the Government fully support the statements in the motion.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Would it be possible for us to have an early debate on the Government's inconsistent attitude to small businesses, so that we could raise the problem of a firm in my constituency which created 15 jobs with Government assistance but has been forced out of business apparently because Customs and Excise was not prepared to wait a month for a small amount of VAT?

Mr. Newton: I am obviously unable to make a detailed comment on any particular case, but I dispute the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that there is some inconsistency in the Government's approach. The Government are consistently anxious to encourage small businesses, but obviously that has to be done within a framework of law about taxes and obligations.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): May I urge my right hon. Friend to go a little further than he did in answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery)? There has now been a long delay in implementing the Jopling report or, indeed, parts of it. Does my right hon. Friend intend at least to make a statement before Easter so that the matter can be debated afterwards and the House can decide what changes it wants to make?

Mr. Newton: Again, I well understand why my right hon. Friend presses me on the matter. I have said that discussions are proceeding in the ways in which they do in the House and my right hon. Friend the Chairman of the Procedure Committee is aware of that. I hope that the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) is also noting the comments that are being made on this side of the House.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): Can the Leader of the House arrange for an emergency debate on the way in which the internal market in the NHS is allowing patients to die? If not, will he ensure that the Secretary of State for Health comes to the Dispatch Box next week to comment on what Dr. Duncan Dymond, the cardiac consultant at St. Bartholomew's hospital, has told *The Guardian* readers today about how patients are dying as a result of the Government's policies?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give the hon. Gentleman an undertaking that the Secretary of State for Health will make a statement in the terms that he requested. Nor, indeed, do I accept the charges that he made. I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will find a way of making her own comments about what has been reported.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Leader of the House undertake to provide a day's debate in the near future for us to discuss the government of the United Kingdom and demonstrate that the last thing that England needs is a new tier of regional government and that to set up a parliament in Scotland and an assembly in Wales would strike deeply at the integrity of the United Kingdom?

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise that debate, but my hon. Friend's sentiments will be widely shared perhaps not only on this side of the House.

Mr. Gordon McMaster (Paisley, South): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a debate on the case of the British nuclear test veterans? Is he aware that three times between May and June last year the Prime Minister assured me that the National Radiological Protection Board study would be published before the end of 1992? Now we believe that it may not be published by the end of 1993—too late for many nuclear test veterans.

Mr. Newton: Both the Secretary of State for Defence and, as I have already said, the Secretary of State for Social Security will be answering questions during the business that my statement covered. In any event, I will draw their attention to the remarks that the hon. Gentleman has made. From my previous incarnation I am well aware how difficult and complex some of these matters are.

Mr. David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): The rate of unemployment in travel-to-work areas determines whether an area is given assisted area status, but the way in which the travel-to-work areas are drawn at present masks some serious unemployment in certain towns in the south of England, including in my constituency. Can my right hon. Friend tell me whether next week or before Easter the travel-to-work areas will be redefined?

Mr. Newton: I cannot give my hon. Friend an undertaking on that point, but he will know that the assisted area map is currently under review. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friends who are involved in that to his request.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): How much longer do I have to keep on asking the same question?

Mr. Newton: I cannot tell the hon. Gentleman how much longer he may be able to go on asking the same question. In addition to what I told him last week, I can tell him that I have had a further useful conversation with my hon. Friend the Chairman of the Select Committee on Members' Interests. I am now considering how and when we might make the sort of progress that the hon. Gentleman would wish to see.

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): In the light of the high winds, full moon and surge tides forecast for the east coast next week, will my hon. Friend arrange for a statement, if not a full debate, on sea defence, river defence and evacuation procedures? If he cannot find the time, may I suggest that he take Thursday because to my constituents sea and river defence is a far more important issue than the business that he has already announced?

Mr. Newton: As someone who, as a boy, was living in Harwich on the east coast at the time of the 1952 and 1953 floods, I can well understand my hon. Friend's concern. I will draw it to the attention of my right hon. Friends concerned, the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Is it not a disgrace that the President of the Board of Trade has not brought the coal report to this House? Cannot the Leader of the House go and drag him to the Dispatch Box next week so that we can have a statement on the situation in the coal industry?

Mr. Newton: I do not think the actions specifically requested of me would be entirely appropriate. It is right that my right hon. Friend should consider these matters with the great thoroughness that they require and make a statement when he is in a position to do so, which is what he will do.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): In view of the acres of time devoted to the Maastricht Bill—I do not necessarily criticise that—could my right hon. Friend find a little time to debate the increasingly delicate and serious situation in the former Yugoslavia? We need an update, not only on Government policy, but on exactly where we stand.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will understand if I note his request on this important subject but perhaps make the point that I went to some trouble only the week before last to provide, in effect, a full day to debate those very matters.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that on Tuesday, when the Home Secretary made a statement about juvenile crime, you, Madam Speaker, because of the severe constraints on you and on the time of the House, were able to allow only 40 minutes for the statement and the Front Benches took more than half of that 40 minutes? As juvenile crime and the solutions to it are matters of major importance to every Member, will the Leader of the House arrange an early debate so that those of us who have secure units in our constituencies can advise other hon. Members about the problems, difficulties and successes of secure units?

Mr. Newton: In this respect I appear to have managed to achieve unusual foresight in predicting demands because I had already arranged a debate on crime and crime prevention for tomorrow.

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): May I ask the Leader of the House if he has seen my early-day motion 1511?

[That this House utterly condemns the North Down and Ards Unit of Management, which is shortly to acquire trust status for its despicable decision to replace vitally important cardiac ambulances at the Ulster Hospital, Dundonald with hired taxis for an allegedly trial period of six months from Monday 8 March; calls on the Eastern Health Board to reverse this squalid decision; and calls on the Government to intervene to safeguard the continued use of cardiac ambulances at the Ulster Hospital and its paramedic crew who have made the difference between life and death in a number of cases.]

It refers to the despicable decision by the North Down and Ards unit of management, confirmed by the Eastern health and social services board, to replace the crucially vital cardiac ambulances with hired taxis for the Ulster hospital, Dundonald, in my constituency. Could the Leader of the House provide time for an emergency debate next week so that the authorities can be forced to reverse this squalid decision and to establish an inquiry into the whole financing of the Eastern health and social services board, which apparently provides ambulances free for the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast?

Mr. Newton: I understand that my noble Friend the Minister responsible for health and social services in Northern Ireland is not only aware of the concern that has been expressed but has requested an urgent report from the Eastern health and social services board. I think that perhaps the first thing would be to see what that report says.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Last Friday the House approved the motion moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox) calling for specific provision to combat hurtful and unjustifiable discrimination against disabled people. May we have a statement next week about the Government's intentions as to implementing that resolution of the House?

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Gentleman will undoubtedly have been present and have participated in that debate and he will know that the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People made a considered statement of the Government's approach to these matters and indicated the way in which the Government would seek to carry them forward. I do not think that against that background it would be appropriate for me to make a commitment about a statement on the time scale that the right hon. Gentleman seeks.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): While it is agreeable to have all these debates on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill on Mondays and Thursdays, can my right hon. Friend say whether there is any particular reason why we cannot have such debates on a Tuesday or a Wednesday?

Mr. Newton: It sometimes strikes me as curious how these questions come from those having a particular view on the Bill—not that I complain about that. I shall simply

say, cautiously, that there is a range of factors which determines the pattern of business which the Government suggests to the House.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Is the Leader of the House aware that 2,000 miners and their families in my constituency will be disappointed that we still have not come to a conclusion about their future, and their future work, which was to end at the end of this month. It is now patently clear that the Government cannot sort out the future of the coal industry. We have had a Select Committee report. Can the right hon. Gentleman find time for a debate next week on that report? If the Government cannot do it, let this House decide the future of the British coal industry.

Mr. Newton: I have touched on that subject twice already in the course of responding to questions and I have indicated the hope of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade that he will be in a position to make a statement at the earliest possible moment, but I cannot add to what I have said.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Can I follow the point made by my right hon. Friends about the Jopling report? My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will know that there is a recommendation that there should not be controversial business after 7 o'clock on a Thursday evening. He will also know that on 13 July he gave a certain amount of support to that principle. I understand that next week there is controversial business about terrorism until 7 o'clock on Wednesday, but that thereafter it is not particularly controversial. I wonder whether it would be helpful to the House and to my right hon. Friend if Wednesday's business were exchanged with Thursday's business. That would be very much in accordance with what the Jopling report suggested and my right hon. Friend supported.

Mr. Newton: We would all like to make progress, as I have said several times, on the recommendations of the Jopling report, but recommendations such as those to which my hon. Friend has referred were associated with proposals on the other side of the balance for much greater programming of the progress of Government Bills. I accept that those proposals would not have applied to Government Bills on the Floor of the House, but if my hon. Friend could see his way to agreeing to some programming of Government Bills on the Floor of the House, everything might be a little bit easier.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Would the right hon. Gentleman consider having a debate as soon as possible on the procedures and practices in this House? I refer him paticularly to the way in which Ministers these days seem disdainful of hon. Members on the Back Benches. We are used to having oral questions dodged, but we are now seeing written questions being dodged and, more importantly, Ministers being unavailable for or unwilling to meet hon. Members on crucial issues.

I give just one example. The privatisation of Greater Manchester Buses is putting a great deal of difficulty on the work people in that enterprise who do not know from day to day what the future of their pensions is likely to be. Hon. Members from the Greater Manchester area have been refused a meeting with the Secretary of State over that question and I have had questions, as I said earlier, blatantly dodged on that issue. That should not happen and we need a debate to iron out these problems.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has given me one example, but only one, and I do not complain about that, of the kind of concern that he has in mind. I would be prepared to look at any examples that he gives me and I will specifically take up with my right hon. Friend the point that he has mentioned.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week for a debate on compensation orders? As he knows, the courts have power to award compensation to members of the public who have suffered a burglary, a theft or some other crime against their property, but more often than not the person against whom the order is made gets an instalment order for £1 or £2 a week which is very unsatisfactory. The House should debate whether we should adopt the same system as we have for the Child Support Agency, whereby the state gives the money to the person entitled and then chases, in the case of the Child Support Agency, the absent father, and in the case of victims of crime, the criminal against whom the order has been made.

Mr. Newton: Two things occur to me. First, I doubt that it would be stretching the rules of order to make such a point in the debate on crime and crime prevention tomorrow. Secondly, if that fails, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be here this day week to answer questions.

Ms. Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Will the Leader of the House take time to look at early-day motion 1436, which involves the victims of human growth hormone injections?

[That this House notes that 1,980 British children were treated with cadaver-derived human growth hormone between 1959 and 1985 as part of a medical research programme and drug trial conducted by the UKMRC; notes that the treatments were withdrawn after reports from the United States of America of the deaths from Creutzfeld-Jacob disease of United States recipients; notes further that six confirmed deaths amongst United Kingdom recipients have since occurred; notes with great concern that the cadaveric material consisting of approximately 900,000 pituitary glands was collected and paid for by UKMRC with no practical regard for meeting legal requirements on human tissue removal or the screening out of infected glands; notes that administration of human growth hormone continued without the product ever appearing to fall within the regulatory frameworks of the Therapeutic Substances Act 1956 or the Medicines Act 1968 and thus it escaped any regulation with respect to its strength, quality, purity, safety or efficacy; notes with great concern the plight of the remaining United Kingdom recipients and their families who are faced with the prospect of possibly incubating this disease in its pre-clinical state for up to 35 years, that there are no tests that will detect its presence prior to the onset of clinical symptoms, and that once symptoms occur death is inevitable, particularly horrific and usually follows within 12 months; and demands that the Government intervenes to establish a compensation scheme along the lines of the MacFarlane Trust (Special Payments (2)) for the victims of this scandal and the families of those who have died.]

Will he consider finding time next week for a statement or a short debate on the plight of the 1,908 recipients of

[Ms. Angela Eagle]

those injections who are now at risk of contracting the human equivalent of mad cow disease? Eight people have already died, and there is no way of knowing how many more are at serious risk. Will he consider offering some support to the families of those victims who face a terrible, anguished plight?

Mr. Newton: I well understand why the hon. Lady has felt it right to raise those tragic cases. She will know that the unhappy background is that the treatment concerned was in international use for 25 years and conformed with the best known scientific and clinical practice of the time. In those circumstances, my right hon. Friends have not found it possible to accept that there are grounds for compensation over and above the services available under the national health service and social security Acts.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My right hon. Friend will be aware that there are a number of early-day motions on the Order Paper criticising the affairs of Monklands district council. Is he further aware that the Labour party in Scotland has today published a report saying that the selection and recruitment procedures of that council are open to criticism? Can we have a debate in which the two Monklands Members might voice their criticisms of the council?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend makes an interesting suggestion which I might ask the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) to note and perhaps to pass on to her right hon. and hon. Friends. Were the Leader of the Opposition to join in the request for such a debate —it would be understandable if he did so—obviously I would have to give it close attention.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for an urgent debate on early-day motion 1462 and a further early-day motion that I tabled today on the return of 19th-century working conditions to private licensed mines in my constituency?

[That this House calls upon the President of the Board of Trade and the Secretary of State for Wales to condemn the disgraceful behaviour of certain private coalmine owners in South Wales who are openly flouting employment law, contractual agreements with employees and cutting corners on health and safety provisions; and condemns moreover, the backdoor attempts by British Coal to privatise production at Tower Colliery in the Cynon Valley by contracting-out to commercial companies the surface operations at that colliery, a move which will result in job-losses and a scandalous waste of taxpayers' money in the form of recent investment in surface machinery and equipment, the benefit of which will be enjoyed not by the taxpayers but by the private companies contracted by British Coal, many of which have recently been created by former British Coal staff and managers eager to cash-in on the prospect of the privatisation of the industry.]

For example, Crugua colliery in the vale of Neath, owned by Rhys Jeffries, and Parc Level colliery in Rhiwfawr, owned by Rosemary Griffith, have been operating such practices as the denial of payslips in breach of employment contract law to the men working there, refusing to give sick pay or holiday pay and a number of other breaches of contract and employment law. In one case, again in defiance of their contracts, workers were denied the right to opt out of working over Christmas, and were sacked because they refused to do so. Is this an ominous dress rehearsal for the privatisation of British coal which the Government are planning, and could we have an urgent statement?

Mr. Newton: It does not sound to me as if the hon. Gentleman is seriously suggesting that what he describes is an ominous rehearsal for anything, and if he does, I can disabuse him. He is alleging various breaches of the law or of health and safety requirements. The proper thing for him to do is to bring those allegations, if he wishes to continue to make them, to the attention of the authorities responsible for enforcing the law.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Once again, my right hon. Friend has announced that no less than one third of the allocation of parliamentary time for six working days ahead is to go to the ratification process of the proposed treaty on European union. Could he please bear it in mind, particularly as the Budget debate will take up the week after next, that the debate on the defence estimates is long overdue, as the White Paper was published way back in June 1992? Many people in the armed forces and the defence industries will begin to think, as I and many people outside do, that the Government care more for European union than they do for the defence of the realm.

Mr. Newton: They would be quite wrong, as would my hon. Friend, were they to attempt to draw any such conclusion. Britain's position in Europe is of great importance, as are our defence forces. In the past two or three weeks, we have had at least two full-day debates on matters relating to defence.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): May I draw the Leader of the House's attention to early-day motion 1423 on London's health service, which has now been signed by 101 hon. Members?

[That this House is appalled by the Statement from the Secretary of State for Health on the future of London's Health Service and believes her methods are a cynical manipulation of procedure to allow valued and much loved institutions to wither on the vine; further believes that her strategy for the closure of hospitals and the loss of a large number of beds is a product of the internal market and will exacerbate the crisis for the 150,000 people already on the waiting lists and will lead to huge job losses amongst hospital workers; also believes that the Tomlinson Report is seriously flawed in its statistical base and fails to take account of the mobile population of commuters and tourists; further fails to examine the causes of ill health linked to poor housing and unemployment and that its claims that London is over provided is erroneous; is concerned that the proposals for funding of improved primary care are inadequate to meet the needs that already exist and that the hospital closure programme will seriously damage the accident and emergency services and lose first rate research and teaching facilities; and accordingly calls for the establishment of a London Health Authority which should examine the health needs of Londoners, ensure the best use of existing resources and halt the hospital closure programme.]

Will he now make arrangements for a full debate on the state of London's health service? Can he comment on the fact that the Secretary of State for Health is employing people in her Department to implement the Tomlinson

report and to take part in the closure of hospitals and crucial facilities and the loss of a large number of hospital beds and jobs, with no authority whatsoever, from the House or anywhere else? Does he not think it is time that we had a full debate on the fate of London's health service?

Mr. Newton: In view of the terms in which the hon. Gentleman has spoken, I shall say simply that my right hon. Friend made a full statement, and exposed herself to considerable questioning, in the House earlier this month. I might pay even greater heed to his request, which I note, had he made at least some reference to the fact that the Government are proposing to invest £170 million to build up primary health care in London.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): During the next few weeks, can we have a debate on the high-speed rail link? It will not surprise my right hon. Friend to know that hon. Members representing Kent will put up a vigorous defence and call for environmental protection in what may be proposed. Those of us who represent north-west Kent will wish to discuss the prospects for jobs were an interchange station to be located there.

Mr. Newton: Although I come from the other side of the Thames, I well understand the concern felt in Kent. I cannot promise a debate in quite the way I was asked, but my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be responding to questions on Monday next.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Can I draw the Leader of the House's attention to early-day motion 1504, which calls on the Secretary of State for Scotland to step in and cap the rent increases in Kyle and Carrick, in the same way as he is able to cap poll tax rises?

[That this House deplores the council house rent increases in Kyle and Carrick, which are the largest in Scotland, and on average £5 per week, rising to over £15 per week at the top end; notes that this is a direct consequence of the change in political control at the local elections in 1992, and is a warning to voters in other parts of the United Kingdom; recognised that it will be impossible for most people to pay the increases without enormous hardship, since wages are increasing less than the level of inflation, or are frozen or even reduced; and calls on the Secretary of State for Scotland to intervene to cap these rent rises at no more than the current level of inflation.]

Of course, Kyle and Carrick became Tory-controlled at the last local elections in Scotland. Can we have a debate on the subject next week, so that the record of Tory-controlled councils in Scotland, few though they are, can be exposed?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman must be well aware that the increases to which he refers are entirely a matter for the local authority, and Ministers have no power to intervene.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): So far, the Leader of the House has been negative about having a debate on the mining industry next week. Can I put to him the urgency of a statement from the President of the Board of Trade next week on Grimethorpe pit, which supplies coal to industry? The industry that has been taking that coal is now suffering from lack of supplies. It is urgent that the pit be put back into production. Will the Leader of the House please help to do something about it?

Mr. Newton: I will certainly undertake to draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Further to the Leader of the House's previous answers on coal and the energy review, will he reflect on the fact that it would be completely illogical to have a Budget statement with tax-raising announcements without a White Paper on energy and a chance to debate the funding and taxation of sources of energy in Britain? It would be completely the wrong way round. We need the energy White Paper and a debate on that so that the Chancellor can make the right decisions on energy taxation in future.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure whether I accept the hon. Gentleman's point about the logic of the situation, but I have now said several times that my right hon. Friend will make a statement as soon as he is able to do so. I cannot yet say when that will be.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House make an early statement resulting from his inquiries about marriages in the chapel of St. Mary Undercroft, which I suspect has been a voyage of discovery for both of us? Will he confirm that marriages according to the rites of the Church of England can take place in the chapel, under a licence issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury in an Act of 1533, and that future marriages depend on the registration of the chapel, which lies with the Lord Chief Chamberlain, the Lord Chancellor and Madam Speaker? If there is a fair wind for registration, what would be the parliamentary mechanism for achieving it?

Madam Speaker: Order. That is one example of what is not a business question. It was a question for the Lord President to answer when he comes to the Dispatch Box to answer questions on such matters. In this case, the Lord President is not in a position to answer such a question. I shall therefore pass on to Mr. Hughes.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Which one?

Madam Speaker: I am so sorry. I meant Robert Hughes; but now I know who the next questioner will be.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Does the Leader of the House recollect that some weeks ago he said that he hoped that there would be an announcement soon on the transfer of the petroleum engineering division from London to Aberdeen? Bearing in mind that the Ernst and Young consultants' report has been in Government hands since 5 October, which is almost five months ago to the day, and that every written answer gets the same response—that a decision will be made soon—can he arrange for the President of the Board of Trade to make a statement next week? Let us get the decision over and done with, and stop dithering about.

Mr. Newton: I recollect the exchange some weeks ago, but I am not up to date with when a statement can be made. I shall certainly seek to ensure that I am better informed by the time that I answer questions next week.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Could I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1355, which was signed by 110 right hon. and hon. Members, on the decision of the Secretary of State for

[Mr. Roy Hughes]

Wales to authorise a waste disposal plant in my constituency, following the application by a dubious American firm with a long criminal record?

[That this House condemns the action of the Secretary of State for Wales in giving the go-ahead to the American concern Browning Ferris for the construction of a waste disposal plant in the Liswerry area of Newport, Gwent despite the unanimous opposition of the Newport Borough Council and the flagrant disregard of the wishes of the people of the town; and notes the questionable record of the company involved, the traffic hazard near to a heavily built-up area, the danger to cattle and agricultural products, the detrimental effect on property values and on health and the environment, which overall will have the effect of turning Newport, Gwent and South Wales into a dustbin for waste products from all over the world.]

Does the Leader of the House appreciate that that decision has caused great anger and dismay among my constituents? If the Government are going to make such controversial decisions in that questionable field, surely we should have a full debate on the matter in the House so that they can announce their policy.

Mr. Newton: Many decisions on planning matters are controversial, and I accept that that decision was. I understand that it was taken on the recommendation of an inspector following a full public inquiry, as is the case with most such decisions.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

BILL PRESENTED

Disability (Grants)

Mr. Secretary Lilley, supported by Mr. Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr. Secretary Hunt, Mr. Secretary Lang, Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew, Mrs. Secretary Bottomley, Mr. Nicholas Scott and Mr. Alistair Burt, presented (under Standing Order No. 48 (Procedure under bills whose main object is to create a charge upon the public revenue)) a Bill to provide for the making of grants by the Secretary of State and the Department of Health and Social Services for Northern Ireland to the Independent Living (Extension) Fund, the Independent Living (1993) Fund and Motability: And the same was read the First time and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 152.]

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 25 February]

[Mr. Michael Morris *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

Treaty on European Union

5.2 pm

Several hon. Members: On a point of order——

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before I take any points of order I have two announcements. First, I have concluded, after due reflection, that amendment No. 443 is not in order. Secondly, if Members have requested a separate Division on an amendment and I have decided to grant the request, I propose to announce my decision before the Committee begins the debate immediately preceding the separate Division. Thus, we are about to embark on a debate on amendment No. 18. When that debate is concluded I shall be prepared to permit a separate Division on amendment No. 28, before beginning the next debate, which is on amendment No. 29, on subsidiarity.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You will understand my disappointment on your ruling, but, of course, I accept it, and I accept that your rulings on all such matters are final.

I ask for your further guidance on a related matter: our ability to table amendments to clause 1(2), which would express approval for some parts of the Maastricht treaty, for the purposes of the European Assembly Elections Act 1978, but not of other parts. You will be aware that I have been delving into the debates in *Hansard* covering the time when the Act was passed. In the debate on 2 February 1978 the then Minister of State, now Lord Judd, said in response to questions from the right hon. Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), who was speaking from the Opposition Front Bench at the time and inquiring about the general point:

"The other point, also properly raised by the hon. Gentleman, was whether Parliament could amend a Bill to authorise an increase in the Assembly's powers. Again, the answer is 'Yes.'"

He added:

"Parliament would not be able to alter the words of a treaty, but it could require the Government in some cases to ratify subject to a reservation."—[*Official Report*, 2 February 1978; Vol. 943, c. 834.]

In the light of that statement and of the recent House of Lords decision, which indicates that Ministers' explanations and statements at the Dispatch Box are to be taken as evidence of the meaning and intention of legislation, will you consider the matter further? I am not asking you to give further consideration to my amendment. I ask whether section 6 of the 1978 Act allows this House to express its approval of some parts of a treaty but not others, which is the inference to be drawn from the statement by the Minister of State in 1978.

The Chairman: I am grateful for the way in which the hon. Member has expressed his point of order. I shall consider the matters that he has raised, but he will understand that I will have to do so in the context of a written amendment.

Mr. Michael Spicer (Worcestershire, South): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I fully understand and accept that you do not give reasons for your judgments and decisions about whether an amendment is in order. If amendment No. 443 was technically defective—as I and some others think that it might well have been—may I assume that a decision on a similar amendment, which was not defective, would not be pre-empted by your decision today?

The Chairman: I repeat what I told the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald). I have to have something in writing before I can rule. Obviously, if it is a question of a minor technical matter, such as English, guidance will be given by the Clerks in the Public Bill Office.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I appreciate your remarks in relation to the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), which was similar to the starred amendment tabled by the Opposition Front Bench. Clearly, we should all like to approach you to seek advice on how a similar ploy might be attempted again.

On the question of the admissibility of amendments broadly concerned with the social protocol, we have already mentioned that our ability to table them again and have them selected, as distinct from their being found to be in order, relates directly to your decision to allow another debate on the issues surrounding amendment No. 27.

I appreciate, Mr. Morris, that last Thursday you made it clear that you did not intend to take an early decision on the matter. May I ask your advice on where we stand in relation to further amendments that might relate to the part of the treaty that we have now passed, in terms of debating opportunity? That would help the Committee. I do not want to press you beyond the hint that you may have given in your statements last Thursday and on the previous Monday, but we should like to know whether amendments that might be deemed in order would have a reasonable chance of selection if you chose to allow further debate on the general subject.

The Chairman: It is not the practice of the Chair to consider starred amendments until they cease to be starred, so those on the Order Paper that are starred will be considered on Monday.

We are still some way off having to consider anything to do with amendment No. 27. As the hon. Gentleman will know, attempts are being made by hon. Members on both sides of the House to produce more amendments relating to this broad area. It would be wrong of me to make a judgment at this point on whether other amendments—or how many of them—may exist by that time. The nearer we get to it, the better my position will be to judge whether to accede to requests for a further debate.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Following the ruling of the Attorney-General on amendment No. 27 and its consequences, I think that there was a general view that hon. Members would like a vote on whether the United Kingdom should adhere to the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty. Are you not against that in principle?

The Chairman: I think that I need to study the amendments before I make any announcements.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You did not mention in your statement my amendment No. 445, which is related to amendment No. 27, but which, it is proposed, should be included in the Bill as an exception from the provisions of the protocols. Am I to understand that you are still waiting to make a decision on that amendment, or do you agree that it is in order?

Amendments Nos. 441 and 442 both exclude the French and Portuguese protocols. Amendment No. 400, tabled by the Liberal Democrat party, excludes the United Kingdom's protocol in respect of the European central bank—and, of course, our opt-out—so it is similar to amendment No. 27.

Quite apart from the merits of my amendment, do you agree that it would be invidious to distinguish between it and others of a similar kind.

The Chairman: Hon. Members normally speak to their own amendments and can look after themselves without the assistance of other hon. Members, but, as a general rule, if, after it is no longer starred, an amendment is not on the Order Paper, it is not selected.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): Further to an earlier point of order, Mr. Morris. You referred to the need to have a written amendment to consider before making a ruling. I invite you to consider amendment No. 448 in the context of an appeal for a renewed debate on the social chapter. With your indulgence, Mr. Morris, may I take the opportunity to put before you certain factors to do with the previous debate on the social chapter which in my submission are relevant to your decision on whether to allow another debate——

The Chairman: Order. That is exactly what I will be considering. As I have already said, amendment No. 448 is starred.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You will be aware that the Government are likely to be anxious to secure procedural motions later today. Through unusual channels I understand that the Government are in negotiation with some of the minor parties. Before any vote is taken today——

The Chairman: Order. Negotiations between the parties in the House are nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wants to complain about the Government or the Opposition, he knows where to do so. It is not the responsibility of the Chair, and the hon. Gentleman has been in the House long enough to know that.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In what I can only describe as a characteristically courteous note from you that I received today, you informed me in response to my request that you do not intend to call new clause 26, which

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

I have tabled, for a separate vote. The new clause enjoys immense support in Scotland, but that is not my point of order.

What criteria do you use, Mr. Morris, in determining whether to select or reject amendments and new clauses for votes?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman will understand that many factors come into that consideration.

5.15 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Among the many considerations that you have to bear in mind when deciding whether to call an amendment, do you pay any attention—you will probably tell me that this is not true—to political alliances and shifts of opinion in the House? Is it conceivable, now that we are moving up towards Newbury, that the Liberal party is shifting its ground and pushing a bit harder against Maastricht? The party does not really mean that, but it might try it. Will you pay attention to that over the next three months?

The Chairman: Certainly not.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In view of the changed domestic arrangements that we would be required to make, I wonder whether you have had any communication from the Government to the effect that, after moving the 10 o'clock motion next Thursday, they will intend to take the debate through the weekend?

The Chairman: I am concerned about today, not next week.

Mr. Cash: Further to my earlier point of order, Mr. Morris. Do you agree that if amendment No. 27 were passed, it would be essential for the matters in question to be complemented by provisions in the Bill, so that it would be quite wrong not to consider selecting an amendment that translated the effects of amendment No. 27 into the Bill? Parliament would then have instructed the Government, by passing the amendment, that the social protocol should be excluded from the treaty and, hence, from the Bill.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian and he is well aware of the Report stage.

Without further ado, we may now begin discussing the amendments.

Mr. George Robertson: I beg to move amendment No. 18, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 138d on page 42 of Cm 1934)'.

The Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following: Amendment No. 33, in page 1, line 9, after 'II' insert

'(except Article 158 on page 44 of Cm 1934 relating to the appointment of the Commission).'.

Amendment No. 34, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(with the proviso that the Government of the United Kingdom shall before the nomination of persons they intend to appoint as members of the Commission seek the approval of the House of Commons to the nomination of those persons).'.

Amendment No. 99, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 146 on page 43 of Cm 1934 which relates to the composition of the Council of Ministers)'.

Amendment No. 168, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 8d on page 12 of Cm 1934)'.

Amendment No. 221, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 189c(a) on page 52 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 222, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 189c(e) on page 52 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 235, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 138b'.

Amendment No. 236, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 138e'.

Amendment No. 393, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 138(c) as referred to in Article G on page 42 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 394, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 147 as referred to in Article G on page 43 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 395, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 151 as referred to in Article G on page 43 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 396, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 159 as referred to in Article G on page 45 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 397, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 160 as referred to in Article G on page 45 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 398, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'except Article 175 as referred to in Article G on page 47 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 430, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 157(2) on page 44 of Cm. 1934 relating to the independence of members of the Commission).'.

Amendment No. 19, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Article 10, Clause 2 on pages 60 and 61 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 21, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Article 9 on page 60 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 22, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Article 10 on page 60 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 23, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Article 20a on page 62 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 24, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Article 20b on page 62 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 25, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Article 20d on page 62 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 26, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Chapter V on page 65 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 136, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'except paragraph 3 of Article 21'.

Amendment No. 137, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'except Article 20d'.

Amendment No. 410, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Articles 7 to 17 on pages 60 to 62 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 413, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Articles 20a to 24 on pages 62 to 63 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 141, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert

'except paragraph 3 of Article 108'.

Amendment No. 142, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert

'except Article 107d'.

Amendment No. 414, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert

'(except Articles 107 a-c on pages 69 and 70 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 417, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert

'(except Articles 160 a-c on pages 74 to 76 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 55, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 137 in Title II thereof'.

Amendment No. 143, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not paragraph 3 of Article 21 in Title III thereof'.

Amendment No. 144, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not of the second paragraph of Article 24 in Title III thereof'.

Amendment No. 148, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 107a in Title IV thereof'.

Amendment No. 219, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 189a(2) on page 50 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 220, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 189b on pages 51 and 52 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 285, in page 1, line 14, leave out subsection (2).

Amendment No. 426, in page 1, line 17, at end add

'with the proviso that Article 138(3) is fully implemented in the United Kingdom before the fourth direct elections to the European Parliament.'.

New clause 21—Rejection of common position—

'(1) Where, in pursuance of Article 189b of the Treaty of Union, Paragraph 2 (c) or (d) of that Article, the European Parliament has given notice that it intends to reject the common position of the Council of Ministers of the Community, Her Majesty's Government shall lay before Parliament in a Command Paper an account of the Commission proposal and the view of Her Majesty's Government concerning that proposal the reasons for the Council common position, its reaction to any proposal of the European Parliament, and any subsequent proceedings of the Concilliation Committee and subsequent events provided for in the Article.

(2) Any Report shall include reference to any United Kingdom parliamentary proceeding related to that proposal and may include matter relating to more than one proposal.'.

Mr. Robertson: This amendment is designed only to allow a debate. It is of a probing nature, and it will not be pressed to a vote. The debate is about the institutions that drive and control the European Community, and it goes to the very heart of the Maastricht treaty and its ambition for an economic and monetary union in our continent, balanced by developed political institutions that will ensure that any such union will be responsible not to crude market forces or faceless bureaucrats and bankers but to the people of Europe.

The debate also provides us with vivid evidence of the Government's real failure at Maastricht in December 1991—their abject failure on behalf of the British people to see that by downgrading democracy, accountability and European decentralisation, just as they dismiss and degrade such things at home, they leave it to others to set the agenda and to mould the future decision-making structures of the European Community.

It was in that historic failure to see the central importance of democratic, responsive, open and accountable institutions that the Government sowed the seeds of the present corrosive conflict that lies at the heart of the Conservative party. It is a shambles. There is a rabble that is out of control. The members have not the slightest atom of knowledge of where they will go in Europe or anywhere else. The 1922 Committee will be having its weekly blood bath in just over half an hour's time. The committee was once seen widely in the political world as the praetorian guard of Tory internal discipline. Week by week, it resembles a badly scripted Marx Brothers comedy.

Mr. Marlow: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: Talk about the starring role.

Mr. Marlow: Was that my cue? The hon. Gentleman is having a spot of fun. Before he goes any further, will he confirm that there is a total identity of views between himself and the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on this issue?

Mr. Robertson: It is necessary only to mention the Marx Brothers and up pops the hon. Gentleman. I was classically on cue. I believe that I have the total support of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on the basis of what I have said and what I shall say.

Mr. Skinner: Will my hon. Friend give way.

Mr. Robertson: I shall give way in a moment. I shall build on the spirit of unity, not qualify it. In the past few weeks, my hon. Friend and I have probably agreed on more things than we have agreed on in the past few years.

Mr. Skinner: Yes, we have been doing very well running the Tories ragged, and I am all for that. I have news for my hon. Friend: he has moved an amendment and I shall vote for it.

Mr. Robertson: I had hoped that the shambles on the Government Benches would have concentrated my hon. Friend's mind. When I said that I was moving the amendment for debating purposes, I thought that my hon. Friend would join me. The Lobbies are, of course, open to anyone. If my hon. Friend feels like voting to remove from the treaty the provisions that allow citizens of Europe to petition the European Parliament, I am sure that he will find some good reason for doing so.

The Government preach openness, but at Maastricht they resisted any move to open up the law-making process that goes on behind closed doors in the Council of Ministers. They were content to leave power in the hands of ambassadors, who meet every day as members of the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the European Community. They, the representatives, are the real rulers of Europe.

The Government preach democracy over bureaucracy, but, at Maastricht, they resisted any new powers for the European Parliament to supervise the increasing law-making powers of the Commission and the Council. Long ago, such powers left national parliaments well behind those bodies. The Government preach flexibility and the taking of decisions at the level that is closest to the people, but at Maastricht they fought against any change to the influence and powers of the unelected Commission. It remained virtually unaffected and unreformed by the treaty, which was signed by Ministers at Maastricht in December 1991.

The Conservative party and Ministers preach about consolidating and entrenching the powers of member states, but their attitude to any vote on the social chapter in the House of Commons shows only too well that their contempt for democratic institutions at the European level is matched by their contempt for any dissent by Parliament.

The right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), the Minister of State, is serving out his notice with patience and fortitude. He is wandering along the Corridors like some Flying Dutchman. It is ironic that he and others are telling us that democracy is at the heart of the Government's crusade. They then tell us, in effect, that Parliament can say anything and do anything and that they will ignore us when Divisions take place. They may think that they can get away with that, but the British people will not let that happen.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Even if one tenth of what the hon. Gentleman is saying is true, why is he not pushing the amendment to a Division?

Mr. Robertson: The amendment would remove from the treaty the power of European citizens to petition the European Parliament on issues of concern. There is no reason why we would want to remove that power from the treaty. Perhaps the briefing room in Great College street will produce a brief for the hon. Gentleman on the Opposition's amendments next time round. I am sure that we shall welcome the hon. Gentleman when he has everything correct and proper.

Mr. Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills): The Opposition's posturing is designed only to take the opportunitity to try to present an impression that the occupants of the Opposition Front Bench have a role in these proceedings. The whole thing is nonsense and a caricature of the parliamentary process, but that is the burden of the argument that lies behind all the Opposition's amendments. The Opposition are posturing so that they might have first gabble at the microphone to assure us that the Labour party is still in existence. The truth and reality is that a proper discussion continues, but it is a sham and nonsense for those on the Opposition Front Bench to come to an arrangement to support my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), the Minister of State.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman would say that in any circumstance. He knows, perhaps more than most, that the only way in which we can have a debate of any sort —I am sure that he is not suggesting that we should avoid debate—is to table amendments that are in order. The only amendments that will be regarded as acceptable by the Chair are those that seek to delete parts of the treaty. That applies even to those parts of the treaty that we support. We are unable to debate the issues that are of concern to Parliament—the hon. Gentleman and I, as well as the wider world outside—without using the mechanism of amendments that seek to delete parts of the treaty. We are reflecting the reality of the procedures of the House of Commons, not posturing.

My right hon. and hon. Friends will appreciate that it is rather too easy nowadays to make fun of the disarray that is to be seen on the Conservative Benches. It is manifest to anyone. We have only to nod to the occasional Conservative Back-Bench Member in the Corridors, or even beyond them, to learn how deep is the discontent with the right hon. Member for Watford—which is pretty well a permanent tradition in the Tory party—and a much wider group of people, including the Prime Minister, whom Conservative Members voted in only two years ago.

Ministers are now coming out in the open; they are emerging from the closet; we are hearing confessions; there are admissions that the Maastricht strategy was wrong all the time. On Tuesday, in the *Financial Times*, the admirable Mr. Ivo Dawnay, who is soon to leave to become foreign editor of the Major-loving *Sunday Telegraph*, told a startled world that the Government have

"set up a high-level committee to draw up a British blueprint for reforms to the European Community institutions."

It "reflects", he says,

"Mr. Hurd's growing conviction that the controversy over the Maastricht treaty is in part the consequence of 'reactive' as opposed to 'active' diplomacy."

Now that the Foreign Secretary has got rid of the right hon. Member for Watford, he can afford to be honest about how the Government got it wrong.

If we continue to read the article, we come to the triumph of exaggerated delusion over bitter experience. It states:

"Mr. Hurd concluded that by promoting a British vision of 'a more flexible and decentralised Community', the Conservative party would be able to reunite after the internal strife provoked by the treaty."

The final concession, mea culpa or ultimate self-condemnation comes in the final paragraph of this short but devastating article. It reads:

"A senior official said that Britain had failed to articulate its vision of the Community early enough in the policy-making process, fuelling the impression that 'we are constantly being shifted by foreigners'."

I do not know whether that is a reference to the right hon. Member for Watford, whose foreign connections are well known and whose linguistic skills have been tested even in the European Parliament, but it suggests that there is a confession in writing that the Foreign Secretary admits that the entire strategy was wrong and that out of the closets of the Foreign Office will come the new solution, the new blueprint or the new vision that will unite the hon. Members for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) with those who sit on the Government Front Bench, who take the Euro-fanatical position. The problem facing the Government is that they are deeply centralising in Britain as they are in Europe.

5.30 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The hon. Gentleman has referred, probably fairly, to discontent within the Foreign Office—I do not know whether it is true —and discontent within the Conservative party. For all we know, there may be discontent within the Labour party. Does he accept that the real discontent is among the people of Britain who find that the Government and Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are opposed to giving them the opportunity to decide the future of their sovereignty? Would not it help to resolve all the long, tedious arguments and all the complaints that are made about different areas if the hon. Gentleman and his party, which has always fought valiantly for people's rights, said that the people should decide the issue, not Members of Parliament?

Mr. Robertson: I have heard that speech from the hon. Gentleman so often that I could probably deliver it better than he can. It comes ill from somebody who is part of a party that supported the poll tax during a long period when the people were crying out for some sort of salvation from the pain of that. Championing the voice of the people is not something one hears with great authenticity from the Conservative party.

We have been around these debates for a long time and Parliament is the right place in which to debate the matter. First, the British people would not have known of the Government's contempt for democracy and for democratic institutions had they not had the opportunity of witnessing the volte face occasioned by the competing legal judgments on amendment No. 27. Secondly, it will be in this Parliament—it would be inconceivable in a referendum—that the people and their representatives will have a voice on the social chapter and the social protocol

of the Maastricht treaty. There is no way that a yes/no question in a referendum would permit the opportunity for a separate view to be taken on the social chapter. That is only one of the many arguments that can be deployed against a referendum. However, the Committee will come to that issue later.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): A large consensus in the Committee in support of the Bill and the treaty remains a permanent feature of these prolonged debates. Is not the answer to the assertion of discontent the fact that, as the hon. Gentleman noted, the so-called chief pro-referendum anti-federal candidate in Bath got 117 votes and the candidate for the same grouping in my constituency at the last election got 49 votes? The real discontent of the British public is that we are obliged, involuntarily, to spend longer on these debates than we would do otherwise because of the objections of a small minority of anti-Maastricht Members from both sides of the Committee who are deliberately prolonging the debates by unnecessary filibustering, so preventing us from discussing——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. It is for the Chair to judge those last matters, which relate to the conduct of the debate.

Mr. Robertson: In European debates one must always watch when someone intervenes in order to help. I know that the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) had that intention in mind. I go along with certain elements of what he said and I accept that the Labour party conference took the view that the Maastricht treaty as a whole was better than any of the available alternatives, but I do not go along with everything else that he says. I believe, and I have believed since the beginning of the process, that Parliament has the right and the duty to scrutinise in some detail the crucial issues concerned with that.

Although there are other issues that should be being debated here—the economy is paramount among them —the reality is that Parliament must still take its time over something that will have a direct effect on our future and the future of many people in Europe. I do not denigrate those on either side of the House—I have no intention of falling out with them at this stage, certainly not at this stage in the evening—who have a different view. They are entitled to put it and at the end of the day the votes will dictate the pace.

Dr. Godman: A moment ago my hon. Friend mentioned in passing the Government's highly centralised nature. Does he agree that, even though the concept of federalism is nowhere to be found in the English text of the treaty, the process of federalisation will be given a huge impetus by its ratification? That may be perfectly acceptable to elected representatives in the 16 German lander, or the regional governments in Spain, but, given this Government's distorted view of federalism, it gives us cause for considerable concern.

Mr. Robertson: That depends on what is meant by federalism. That is one of the great problems with such an emotive word. In the past, the word has confused rather than illuminated debate. For many of our continental partners, federalism means precisely the decentralisation of which my hon. Friend speaks; it means a separation of the powers. If that is the context within which it is debated and discussed, we would all go along with that. We have no interest in a unitary European state. We want no united states of Europe that is built on some sort of central power. I do not believe that the majority of people in Europe have any interest in anything like that either. Their cherishing of their individual national identities and institutions is as great as that of anybody in the House.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I should like to make progress.

Following on the point that my hon. Friend made, the problem for the Government is that they are a centralising Government. They are contemptuous of democracy and accountability. We have seen that in Britain with their attitude to local government. That is mirrored by their contempt for the European Parliament's need to act at a European level as well. The European Parliament needs to act in areas where law making has left national Parliaments and disappeared behind the closed doors of the Council of Ministers. We have decisions on laws which affect the British people in their intimate daily life. Laws which take supremacy over all national laws are increasingly made by qualified majority vote.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): My hon. Friend said correctly a moment ago that, in continental language, federalism means a derogation of power to the component parts of whatever entity we are considering. But does not that postulate the existence of a central entity in the first place—a European super-state, the very European union which is described as being established in the opening words of the Maastricht treaty? Is not the reason, as my hon. Friend rightly says, that we are so often at cross-purposes when we discuss the term federalism that we persist in thinking that it is a matter of passing limited powers upwards, whereas our continental partners have already reached the point in their minds and in practice of establishing a European union from which limited powers will be devolved downwards? Is not the real point that the Maastricht treaty establishes not a federation but a union, a super-state, which has not yet been revealed in its full concept to the British people?

Mr. Robertson: I strongly disagree with my hon. Friend. I completely dissociate myself from that concept. If one were to believe some of the rhetoric— *[Interruption.]* The Minister of State should not be sitting there shouting about united parties, especially since he is about to disappear from the Front Bench of his own disunited party.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): As the hon. Gentleman sought to entertain the House for about 20 minutes pointing out what he perceived to be divisions inside the Conservative party, it is only fair to point out that a number of his right hon. and hon. Friends are also seeking to prevent the United Kingdom from ratifying the treaty. With regard to my own fate, I can set the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest. I intend to support the Administration vigorously, whether it be from this Bench or other Benches.

Mr. Robertson: That is what the right hon. Gentleman told Lady Thatcher when she was leader of the Conservative party.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), who, on an issue of principle,

[Mr. Robertson]

resigned as a Front-Bench spokesman and returned to the Back Benches. There is disagreement about Maastricht in each of the political parties. But we are not the party of government; nor are we suffering from the same chasm as the party of government, which has led it to the paralysed condition in which it finds itself today.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I shall allow the Minister to intervene after I have dealt with the serious point that my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham made, although it is probably more relevant to the next debate on subsidiarity.

I do not believe that the other 11 Community countries intend to create a European super-state, from which they will derogate a few minor powers. There is nothing to suggest that any of them have an interest or desire so to do. They believe that power should be taken to the centre only where it makes sense and is relevant, and that the majority of powers and influence should be retained at national level. That is why the creation of these institutions is so important and why the power of, for instance, the European Parliament is so relevant.

The House believes in its own role. It believes in its own importance in scrutinising legislation, but we have reached a stage, from which even my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham cannot seek to go back, where decisions are increasingly taken by qualified majority vote in the Council of Ministers. Decisions about laws that will affect British people are taken behind the closed doors of the Council of Ministers and are never scrutinised again by elected representatives of the people. The Maastricht treaty's provisions on the European Parliament seek to correct that.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and am delighted——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) knows that we cannot have two hon. Members standing at the same time. I understood that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) had given way to the hon. Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor).

Mr. Taylor: I am grateful. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) dissociated himself from the views of the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). Is not it revealing, even on the terms of intervention of the hon. Member for Dagenham, that the assumption is that the Maastricht treaty seeks to derogate European powers downwards? Hon. Members who voted for the Single European Act, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), do not recognise that the Maastricht treaty introduces decentralising powers into what could have become a more centralised structure. The treaty brings institutions closer to the people, which is what makes us so keen to get on and ratify it.

Mr. Robertson: I am pleased to act as a vehicle for debate in the Conservative party. I do not dissociate myself from the views of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham, but I disagree with his interpretation of what is happening in Europe. From my experience of meeting people from various political parties, but mainly from the socialist and social democratic parties, I can say that it is not their intention to move in the direction that my hon. Friend suggests that we are inexorably taking. It is important that we strengthen existing European institutions to prevent the possibility of such a thing happening.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Mike Gapes (Ilford, South): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Robertson: I will give way, first, to my hon. Friend and then to the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), from whom I have never run away, because I have always considered him to be the best of fun.

Mr. Gapes: Does my hon. Friend agree that the interpretation of federalism in the Federal Republic of Germany is not centralised union or a super-state? It is inaccurate, therefore, to suggest that the European concept was based on a centralised European super-state. The concept of Europe is clearly different in various countries, but the German federal model, which owes much to the democratic changes that were made by British and other occupation forces after the second world war, is one of decentralisation without a centralised super-state.

Does my hon. Friend further agree that, unlike last year's Conservative party conference, the Labour party conference held a vote on whether to endorse the Maastricht treaty? It said that the treaty was the best obtainable measure, whereas the Conservative party uses a clapometer to gauge how many people applaud Norman Tebbit and how many——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Interventions should be short. The hon. Gentleman's intervention sounded more like a speech.

5.45 pm

Mr. Robertson: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. His words are extremely wise on both counts. He and I have attended many European meetings, at which we did not spot the federalising, centralising obsession about which some hon. Members speak. He rightly states that the Labour party agreed its policy on Maastricht in a democratic vote at its conference. That represents our policy, and we consulted the people, which I am sure would appeal to the hon. Member for Southend, East.

Mr. Cash: At its last conference, the Labour party decided to oppose a referendum on the Maastricht treaty and that, apparently, is the position of its Front-Bench spokesmen, but we understand that the Leader of the Opposition has now said that Labour would like a referendum on proportional voting. Can he reconcile those two completely different positions?

Mr. Robertson: I am not aware that the Leader of the Opposition has said that he wants a referendum. He has not said that——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. This is a broad debate, but that seems to be stretching it far too wide. We shall debate referendums later, not now.

Mr. Robertson: I appreciate and respond instantly to your interpretation, Dame Janet.

I always welcome an intervention from the hon. Member for Stafford. I referred to him in the *House Magazine* this week, because the week before last I

attended a Scottish Statutory Instruments Committee considering the Lanarkshire enterprise zone, believing that I had escaped the dreadful world of Maastricht. I was horrified to see the hon. Members for Stafford and for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) sitting on the other side of the Committee. I thought that they were being permanently mobilised around the House of Commons to scare me, but I realised that they had to attend as a punishment.

I described them as the Hale and Pace of the Maastricht debates, not as a simple point of abuse but because I recall the famous Hale and Pace sketch, which I am sure hon. Members will remember vividly, in which they were acting the part of two cooks testing a microwave. At one point, to the horror of the watching audience, they took a cat and said, "The microwave is extremely useful for cooking cats: all you do is open the door, put the cat in, close the door and turn on the microwave. Here is one that we prepared earlier", and this frazzled object was put up to the audience of children and animal lovers, who were horrified by the low taste of the sketch.

It seems that some Members on the other side of the argument continue to hold up the frazzled cat as an example of what would happen if Maastricht were ratified, just as they held up frazzled cats in the debate on the Single European Act——

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. I have had enough of frazzled cats.

Mr. Robertson: I now appreciate, Dame Janet, that to choose the day when the occupant of the Chair is a former president of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Animals—[HON. MEMBERS: "Cruelty".]—for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was perhaps not a master stroke of timing.

The hon. Member for Stafford was in favour of the proposal and did not produce the frazzled cat on that occasion. However, horror stories are endlessly put about; it would be better to concentrate on reality rather than the powers of imagination.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I know that my hon. Friend wants to intervene, but I must make progress. I am sure that he will find something to object to in the rest of my speech and I shall be glad to give way to him at that point.

The European Parliament is not popular in the House. It still does not command wide popularity in the country or the same voting enthusiasm as domestic parliamentary elections, but few people who watch Europe would doubt that the calibre of its membership has improved considerably and that its role and influence have increased and will inevitably become greater.

We dismiss, ignore or ridicule the European Parliament, its members and its powers at our peril. We must set about ensuring that the role of its Members is built into what we do here because the future of our country in Europe is not an issue on which we can afford to delude ourselves into thinking that our two institutions are separate, independent or distinct for the carrying out of the tasks before us.

I wish to ask the Minister of State to answer one question. Following the Maastricht decision, it was decided at Edinburgh to increase the number of European Parliament seats by six. The Government have still not said how the seats are to be created, although we have been told that a new Boundary Commission might have to be instituted for the purpose. That will require primary legislation. This afternoon, the Leader of the House was unable to answer my right hon. Friend the deputy leader of the Labour party, but I hope that the Minister of State, who is more intimately involved in these affairs, will be able to tell us when the urgent need—urgent for all political parties—will produce an answer as to when the primary legislation can be introduced.

Sir Russell Johnston: If the hon. Gentleman were faced with a proposition that the six seats were to be treated as added member seats, similar to the German electoral system, in order to correct the lack of proportionality in elections to the European Parliament, how would he react?

Mr. Robertson: The Government have already decided that the matter will be decided by a Boundary Commission and by an extension of the number of existing seats. The Labour party is currently engaged in a major study of electoral reform, and I do not want to pre-empt its findings. However, speaking personally, I believe that the worst way of introducing any type of electoral reform or proportional representation would be to say that the creation of six seats was to cause a major change to the British constitution merely because we did not have time to establish a Boundary Commission. There would be plenty of time if the Government would start now and then consider the future role for European Parliament seats when we are clear about what will happen.

The European Parliament gains some new and significant powers under the Maastricht treaty. Of course, that is despite animated opposition from the Government to any extension in European Parliament powers. In December 1991 the Foreign Secretary said:

> "We are not persuaded by the case . . . for adding again to the powers of the European Parliament".

However, it has new powers. It gains a new power of veto. The negative assent procedure is the Euro-jargon method of dodging the difficult word "veto", but, in certain restricted, although important, aspects of law making, a veto is exactly what the European Parliament will have.

That means that the European Parliament now has a total of five co-decision powers to influence policy in the Council of Ministers. All are complicated and dense and virtually all are incomprehensible, even to the Members of the European Parliament. The Maastricht treaty provides it with a new influence over the appointment of the European Commission, its President and its programme. There is a new right of citizens to petition the European Parliament, and the creation of an ombudsman to allow individuals to have Community maladministration investigated.

However, these powers are in no way sufficient to fill what is fashionably called the "democratic deficit". They in no way properly reflect the fact that there is more qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers—and there is a big extension of qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers despite opposition from the Government.

In Glasgow in 1991 the Foreign Secretary made it clear that the Government were opposed to

> "significantly extended qualified majority voting".

However, there have been 61 new extensions of qualified majority voting in the treaty signed at Maastricht. Decisions on laws are now taken and implemented without

[Mr. Robertson]

any further reference to the elected representatives of the people who will be affected by them. That has to be unacceptable and, at the 1996 intergovernmental conferences, the accountability of the Council to elected representatives must be high on the agenda.

The European Commission came out of the Maastricht process virtually unscathed. Despite the fact that it is unelected and has considerable power and influence, and despite the fact that there is growing concern at its monopoly on initiating legislation, its powers were scarcely trimmed and it was not made more accountable. In fact, having been given the new power to fix penalties for not complying with European Community laws and decisions, the Commission has been handed significant influence and control.

It will remain one of the ironies of contemporary European history that it was largely Lady Thatcher's enthusiasm for penalties and fines against Governments for non-compliance with Community laws which will now give the European Commission, which she so hated and loathed, the most remarkable new power to enforce Euro-policy.

Mr. Spearing: Is not that an example of the greater central powers which my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) cited a moment ago? We already have a single market and a single Council determining what that market shall be. We have a prospective single currency, a prospective single bank and a commitment, if the Bill is passed, to a single foreign policy. How can my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) deny that that is the most extreme form of centralism?

Mr. Robertson: It is centralism only if the other institutions do not have the proper balance to allow the will of the people to be heard. We are creating new institutions where we believe them to be appropriate at a European level. There is nothing wrong with that. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) has a deep interest in environmental policies. I am sure that he will agree that national policies alone on airborne pollution make no sense in the modern world. Laws relating to pollution, and air pollution in particular, must be made at a European level. The decision has been taken——

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I shall answer my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South and then I shall happily give way to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore).

The decisions were taken, and we are now considering how Community institutions can be sufficiently strengthened to ensure that the will of the people is expressed in relation to what powers we, as a nation or group of nations, choose to concede at a European level. That is why so much of my speech, which has already gone on too long, has been devoted to the powers of the European Parliament. We cannot say that decisions have been ceded to the European level and, at the same time, say that we shall not give added power to the European Parliament —although the House has already given them away.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend is obviously ready to transfer to the upper tier of new authority being created in Europe virtually all the major powers of self government, and he justifies that on the grounds that there they will be taken at a more appropriate level. He cites the environment. If we are serious about the environment, we should look for a solution not at the western European half-continental level, but at the global level. Does my hon. Friend advocate our becoming part of a world government, part of an expanded United Nations? What would he say, for example, to the proposition that we should be better defended by a huge European army or a combined European defence force? Would he be happy to hand over our powers of self defence to such a body? Would he not prefer such arrangements to come under NATO rather than being taken away from us to be decided by a supranational law-making body?

6 pm

Mr. Robertson: I have been through all that before with my right hon. Friend. In the days when we used to agree, when we stood side by side in the internal battles in the Labour party of those times, we stood on defence and on protecting the cause of NATO, to which this country long ago voluntarily ceded one of the most important elements of sovereignty. Now, as ever, if there were an attack on one of the nation states in NATO the armed forces of all the nation states would automatically and immediately be put under an integrated military command. That is the principle—a principle which my right hon. Friend stood by, and one which we safeguarded within the Labour party at that time.

I believe, and I believe that my party believes, that we should cede sovereignty only where appropriate and relevant. That is what we have done in the past. Where sovereignty has been ceded, whether previously or now, we must ensure that we have created the democratic institutions in the Community that will give the people of Europe the right to say what the new laws will be.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North) *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I intend to finish my speech shortly, so, however tempting it may be to have a generalised debate, I shall resist the temptation. I see that my speech has already outlasted three different occupants of the Chair, and that serves as a reminder for me.

The debate on the institutions of the European Community is not simply about remote organisations loosely referred to as, and sometimes seen as, "Brussels". The institutions, their strengths, their representativeness, their openness and their closeness to the people of Europe will determine, by and large, whether the successful system of western European co-operation, from which this generation has benefited so much, will be sustained and will survive the new pressures facing Europe and the world.

The Foreign Secretary was right when he told the *Financial Times* that we needed a British blueprint for European Community reform, and that this country has been too negative and reactive, and not nearly constructive and positive enough, in what we say and do. The right hon. Gentleman was also right to say that as a result "we are constantly being shifted by foreigners". He is correct, even if his awakening to that fact is belated. The drawing up of that blueprint, that vision—the definition of British interests in Europe—must not be the business simply of the committee combining Foreign Office and Cabinet personnel that the *Financial Times* tells

us has been set up. That task, which is so crucial to the future of this country, must include other political parties, and the House and its Committees.

One of the clearest and most depressing failures of the British role in Europe—here, we are markedly different from other partner states—is the Government's unwillingness to reach a national consensus at least on the objectives of Britain in Europe. We must look positively not only at what can be achieved at the European level—the whole of the European level—but at what the price of failure would be.

Today we face economic turmoil unprecedented in modern times, with soaring unemployment, deepening recession, destructive economic competition and beggar-my-neighbour attitudes all combining to leave the whip hand with the bankers and speculators. We also face a growing political crisis, which derives partly from the recessionary pressures, with political instability, vicious nationalism and pernicious forms of racism on the march. Those are formidable and immediate dangers for our continent. If we are ever tempted to ignore those perils and problems, we risk something quite horrible happening.

We must not underestimate what is happening in our continent and to our people today. That is why it is crucial that the creation and reinforcement of robust, democratic, popular institutions for European unity should remain the collective objective of all who care about the future of our continent.

Mr. Cash: The speech by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) showed a complete lack of observation and interest in what is really going on in the Committee. He made no serious attempt to tackle the real questions which lie at the heart of the provisions that we are supposed to be considering.

The hon. Gentleman blithely and absurdly referred to European institutions as if they are just another piece of paper that does not matter much. He says that the amendments are only probing amendments. My hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Mr. Shepherd) intervened in the hon. Gentleman's speech to say that Labour Members were posturing, but the hon. Gentleman's speech was not so much posturing as imposturing—an attempt merely to probe a matter which goes to the heart of the democracy of the House and of the relationship between the people of this country and their Government. The hon. Member for Hamilton and many of his colleagues make no serious attempt to investigate the basis on which the charade of the Maastricht treaty and the Bill has been constructed, or the deception that lies at its heart.

What is really taking place is a deliberate attempt to drain away the real powers of the House. Attempts—albeit fairly modest—have been made to sustain the overall thrust of a move towards a unitary state, as the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said earlier: towards the creation of a European union and the construction of all the framework necessary to achieve that objective.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend has postured pretty effectively throughout the Committee's proceedings on the reasons why he felt able to support the Single European Act. Can he posture a little further and explain to the Committee precisely in which respects the group of amendments under consideration breaks new ground that was not broken by the Single European Act, which he supported?

Mr. Cash: The simple answer is, because this is a gravitational pull, which is moving the whole process from the basis of the Single European Act, which was a perfectly reasonable basis to start from, into a relationship which has been materially changed by the provisions on economic and monetary union, especially those connected with stage 2. The Minister understands that perfectly well, as he has been a party to it throughout.

The Minister appeared before the Select Committee on European Legislation the other day. As will be seen from the transcript of the Committee's proceedings, he went to considerable lengths to attempt to divert attention from the provisions of stage 2 on economic and monetary union. He did so because he knows that they are having a profound impact not only in their gravitational pull but in cutting the umbilical cord through the creation of a European Monetary Institute, which in turn will require the Governor of the Bank of England neither to seek nor to take instructions from the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House, and thereby from the people of this country —the people who put us all into our positions as Members of Parliament, and put the Government into power. If the Minister does not think that those provisions go beyond gravitational pull and actually create a completely new dimension, I should like to know what his answer would be.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I should like my hon. Friend to address himself to the question that I put to him. As he now seems to be alleging that the Maastricht treaty is the greatest constitutional outrage, theft and deception in his political lifetime and in mine, and as he voted for the Single European Act, in respect of which there was a timetable motion, may I ask at what point it became apparent to him that the gravitational force to which he refers was pulling him in the wrong direction? Was it just after he voted for the Single European Act, or when he fought the last election——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. This is all very well, but we really ought to get back to the powers of the European Communities.

Mr. Cash: I am always very glad to observe a Minister receiving a rebuke from the Chair. I am glad that my right hon. Friend has retained his sense of humour, which was evidenced by his question.

The Single European Act is quite different from these provisions. There is a huge difference between what is provided for in the Act that we passed in 1986 and the enormous changes resulting from this treaty's impact on our democratic rights—not only the rights of Parliament but the rights of the country as a whole.

The provisions with which we are dealing commence primarily with the European Parliament. Following what my right hon. Friend the Minister said a moment ago, I should like to make a point about the way in which the powers being granted by this treaty to the European Parliament dovetail with the arrangements under article 138a, which says:

"Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union."

[Mr. Cash]

Contrary to what the Minister of State has just said—as if this were a matter of no interest or consequence to anybody—what we have here represents a complete change from the Single European Act. The fact that we are dealing with political parties at European level—something to be regarded as a factor for integration—is a completely new dimension.

Let us consider for a moment the status of the European People's party in the European Parliament. That party's constitution is unashamedly and avowedly federal. Its objective is a united states of Europe. It has no doubt that that is the direction in which it wants to go.

Mr. Hoon: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cash: I am happy to give way to the hon. Gentleman, as he knows a good deal about the EPP.

Mr. Hoon: As the hon. Gentleman was referring to the European People's party, it occurred to me that, since the Conservative party has joined the EPP, it is likely that he will be a member of that organisation.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted to be able to respond to that point. Indeed, I was just about to give my reasons for wanting to have nothing to do with the EPP. In fact, I do not want my party to be directly associated with any such organisation. The avowed objective of the EPP is a federal and/or unitary Europe. Furthermore, it is tied to the Christian Democrats, which has many policies quite at variance with those upon which we, as Conservatives, expect to represent our constituents.

It caused me considerable concern to note that the application for membership of the European People's party—the letter that was written about a year and a half ago by the then chairman of the Conservative party, Christopher Patten, with the full consent of the Prime Minister—was couched in terms making it quite clear that a marriage was taking place. These vestal virgins had been taken to the altar, and had consummated a marriage with the European People's party. Surprise, surprise—the EPP's press release came out in the middle of our general election, lest anyone should notice what was going on.

Thus Conservative MEPs are in a rather difficult situation. They constitute a political party operating at European level. This is indeed important as a factor for integration into the union. They are pursuing a policy—apparently endorsed by the Government: something that I find it very difficult to understand and hope may yet be unravelled—that amounts to support not only for integration and European union, as described in article 138a, but for the whole concept of a united states of Europe. In fact, some of the documentation goes even further by saying that the European union would be a state with all the characteristics of sovereignty. I view these developments with considerable concern, and I regard the Minister's remarks of a few moments ago as quite extraordinary.

Mr. Knapman: If the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) is right in suggesting that federalism is decentralising, would it be a good idea to substitute federal union for even closer union? I thought that we had spent a great deal of time trying to get rid of federalism and introduce even closer union. We seem to be in a muddle in this matter.

6.15 pm

Mr. Cash: Indeed we are in a muddle—some less so than others. My hon. Friend makes a very important point. Only a few weeks ago, Mr. Bangemann said that we ought to face up to the fact that we were moving into a federal system. In every European capital, one finds a perfectly straightforward and honest position. People in European capitals, like people in the institutions of the European Communities, say that they want and intend to achieve a united states of Europe, with a federal and/or unitary system. At least they have the honesty to admit that that is what is going on. I cannot understand why people in this country do not say the same thing. There are, of course, exceptions, like myself, who have every intention of resisting this all the way down the line.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman is always courteous, and is normally very clear, even if one disagrees with what he says. He said a moment ago that he is against muddle. That being the case, will he please stop using the words "federal and/or unitary". He has now used them twice. A system could be federal or unitary, but not federal and unitary. The two concepts are fundamentally different.

Mr. Cash: As ever, I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his gentle rebuke. However, I chose my words carefully. It is almost impossible to give a precise definition of any one federal system. The division of the functions, powers and duties that are transferred upwards and downwards, particularly having regard to the concept of subsidiarity—which we shall discuss later—creates the very confusion and contradiction to which I am referring. The problem was not created by me; it is inherent in the way in which the whole package has been put together.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): It is interesting that the remarks of Martin Bangemann, a vice-president of the Commission, have not been the subject of any controversy outside Britain. None of his colleagues, and no one in Germany, has said that he is wrong. He is saying out loud what others, for obvious diplomatic reasons relating to Britain, are reluctant to say. We should therefore be grateful to Martin Bangemann for warning us about what is involved in this treaty, which is why many of us are quite determined to vote against it at every opportunity.

Mr. Cash: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman. The resolution passed by the Bundestag uses the word "federal" as the basis on which it is intended that the Maastricht process should be construed. A similar position arises on the other aspects of the argument.

Dr. Godman: We are discussing the powers of the European Parliament. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the powers of that Parliament should be enhanced, diminished or left as they are? Is it not the case that the Members of the European Parliament, when given additional powers under the treaty, will not remain satisfied with those enhanced powers? They will want more and more, which makes good sense from their point of view.

Mr. Cash: I am sure that it makes good sense from their point of view. The real question is whether it makes good sense in terms of the European Community. I re-endorse my enthusiasm for the European Community as it stands.

My concern is that the entire treaty is about improving —or, as the treaty puts it, enhancing—federalism throughout the Community. The treaty seeks to turn what is basically a trading arrangement combined with political co-operation, which I can accept, into an arrangement that is based on a massive increase in the transfer of governmental power. I do not believe that it is in the interests of the European Community to pretend that we can increase the powers of the European Parliament in the ways that are intended. That is practising a deception on the people of Europe.

We should be creating an enhanced power for the national Parliaments and improving the quality of scrutiny of European legislation in a way that truly reflects the relationship between the voters and the Members of Parliament. The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who, like me, was a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, knows that perfectly well. The Minister is accountable to the voters and to Members of Parliament as a whole, and thence to the Council of Ministers. To produce an increase in the powers of the European Parliament, which will not work, is practising a deception on the people of Europe. Indeed, such an increase will make even greater the problems that we shall face as Europe falls into greater turmoil, when economic and monetary union and all the other aspirations are seen to have collapsed.

The treaty is perpetrating a fraud on the people of Europe. There is a pretence that the increased powers will fill the democratic deficit; they will not.

Mr. Richard Shepherd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is a pantomime, which seeks to give the illusion that there is a democratic element in the treaty. The very word "Parliament" creates that illusion. The European Parliament has no legislative or other powers of any substance. The deceit of the institutional arrangement is to pretend that there is a democratic input into the European Community. Maastricht does not fulfil that function.

Mr. Cash: There is a role for Members of the European Parliament—I do not deny that—but that role has already been defined, in terms that keep it under some control. The problem is that, under the new arrangements in the treaty, the position will become significantly worse. The centralisation of the process of economic and monetary union is taking away from the voters the power to determine their monetary affairs. The decision-making on the raising of revenue and the dispensing of public expenditure, which will cascade all the way down from the decisions taken by the unelected, unaccountable bank, is directly contrary to the interests of the voters, who will not have the compensation of knowing that they will be properly represented in the European Parliament.

The voters in this country will be properly represented in this Parliament only if we ensure that the centralising arrangements, and economic and monetary union, do not come about. Once we can see that economic and monetary union is to take place, we shall put a lance through the heart of the democracy of this country and deprive the voters of the opportunity to exercise a meaningful choice when they freely elect the people who decide these matters in the House, as Ministers, on behalf of the electorate.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, not least because, for the first time in these debates, I almost agree with him. If the solution in terms of the centralising tendencies is to provide more democratic control over the institution, which is what the hon. Gentleman is saying, is it not right to enhance the powers of the European Parliament, working in conjunction with national parliamentarians? The solution is not to criticise the very modest changes proposed in the Maastricht treaty which would enhance the ability of the European Parliament to control the activities of the European Commission, but to work more closely with the democratic elements in the Community.

Mr. Cash: I gave evidence to the Select Committee on Procedure six years ago, when I said that I thought that there was a case for more contact between Members of the European Parliament and Members of this Parliament. That point was entirely without prejudice to what additional powers the European Parliament might get. Contact, yes; increased powers, no. The changes wrought by the treaty will create a completely new dimension.

The creation of the unelected and unaccountable bank poses a serious problem for the effectiveness of the individual voters of this country and for their freedom to exercise their choice. The institutional problems are also tied up with the question of subsidiarity.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): Does my hon. Friend agree that the essence of democracy is accountability? Each Member of the European Parliament is to represent 500,000 people. If we eventually have a far wider Europe of some 35 countries, as some of us wish, each Member will have to represent 1 million electors. Can we believe that those who seek to represent 500,000 people can do so in full justification? Will they make themselves accountable?

I find it difficult to represent 70,000 people and to be accountable to that number. To be accountable to 500,000 people is a sheer impossibility. There is the added danger that, in seeking to represent that 500,000, one would tend to meet only those who had most influence and power in the constituency, and such people would be manifestly unrepresentative of the whole.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Interventions are becoming longer, and are becoming not mini-speeches but minor speeches. All hon. Members should take note of the fact that interventions are meant to be brief.

Mr. Cash: I very much agree with the sentiment expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body). When people come to see us at our surgeries, there is direct contact which is immensely important to our constituents. With the best will in the world, it is impossible for Members of the European Parliament to perform a similar function.

There is a further problem about scale, as my hon. Friend rightly said. The remoteness of people from Parliament will be a massive problem. It is utterly irresponsible of those who advocate the new arrangements to duck the question, not to take part in these debates and to attempt to obfuscate and to camouflage what is really going on. When the central banking arrangement for the whole of Europe comes into effect, it will affect the voters, and there will have been no compensation, for good reasons, in terms of an increase in the powers of the European Parliament.

These powers, important though they are, would not go anything like far enough for those who advocate a federal

[Mr. Cash]

system. Therefore, the democratic deficit would be increased, but the amount of power that would be centralised and the lack of decision making by the voter in general elections would be enhanced.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is not the size argument really nonsense? As things stand, it is not possible in this country for one hon. Member to deal with a constituency of 70,000 people and the problems they have; it operates only if there is some devolved system and some other involvement. Similarly, on a wider level, it is possible to have a much larger constituency, because, again, there should be devolved organisation for representing them.

6.30 pm

Mr. Cash: I do not agree with what the hon. Gentleman says on that point. To go down the path of devolution would be straying outside the ambit of this debate.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East) *rose——*

Mr. Cash: No, I think that I have given way enough for the moment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] Well, under enormous pressure, I will give way.

Mr. Anderson: That argument is relevant, in this sense. If the hon. Gentleman claims some consistency in seeking proper accountability at the European and the Westminster level, he must also seek appropriate accountability of the agglomerations of power at Edinburgh and Cardiff. If he says no to that because of his unionist credentials, that casts some doubt over the general argument that he is making.

Mr. Cash: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. I am talking here, very simply, about the direct relationship, the contact, between the voter, the member of the public, who has the right in a general election to make a choice, and his elected representatives in this Parliament. My argument is that our system, with its imperfections, is as good as anybody could devise over a period.

The reality, within the general framework of the European Community, is that in our Parliament, by comparison with the French, we debate and discuss these matters. I do not want to go into too much detail, but there are hon. Members who would not want us to debate these matters at all. But this has enormous impact on the people we represent and it would be gravely irresponsible of us —as I think it is of those hon. Members, if that is really the view that they take—to say that those people do not wish to discuss matters which go to the heart of the basis on which they choose their Members of Parliament.

We owe it to them to look at these matters and try to unravel all this verbiage, to see exactly what impact it will have upon them, and then to vote accordingly in the Division Lobbies if we disagree with the arrangements that this treaty and this Bill propose.

Mr. Knapman: I urge my hon. Friend not to move on too fast, but to come back to the word "federal" for a moment. I seem to remember that the dropping of the dreaded F-word was a considerable negotiating triumph, and I suspect that that is so. We now hear from the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) that federalism is a decentralising concept. If there are those two opposing ideas, can my hon. Friend put his mind to why the Liberals should be voting in the same Lobby as some of our colleagues?

Mr. Cash: There are many mysteries attached to the basis upon which the Liberal Democrats will go into various Lobbies. We will discover, perhaps today or on Monday, exactly what they decide to do about a very sensitive amendment which is about to be debated. I sincerely hope that they will do what they honestly believe to be the right thing for their constituents, which is what these provisions are ultimately all about.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that my hon. Friend has noted, as I have, that the coalition between the Government Front Bench Members and the Liberal party on a federal Europe has now gone so far that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) is wearing a blue tie.

Mr. Cash: Even at this distance, I can see the European stars gleaming forth at me from that tie. I must say that, very fine tie though it is, it is not one that I shall be wearing in the immediate future.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): Before my hon. Friend moves on from the relationship between a Member of this House and his constituents, is it not true that at the moment, in most areas of our responsibility, if we find a problem in our constituencies we can bring it to the attention of the appropriate Minister in the House and, if our case is just and urgent, we can get something done about it quickly? If we are sufficiently diligent, energetic and forceful, we can. Is there not a glaring case of one Ministry where that does not apply—the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in connection with which most of the powers have been given away to the European Community?

Mr. Cash: I must say that the sense of powerlessness which is reflected quite often in the behaviour of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food amply supports the point that my hon. Friend has made. One of the great defects of this treaty is the failure to reform the common agricultural policy and all that goes with it. There was an opportunity; had we really been negotiating effectively, I believe that we would have regarded that as one of the most important things to get right, because of the point that my hon. Friend has made and because of the effects that this has upon good and honest British farmers.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Is not the fact that many of these issues, because of previous legislation, are partly decided in the European Community an extremely good reason for hon. Members who wish to assist their constituents to work very closely indeed with MEPs? That is the most effective way of putting pressure on the Executive and keeping an eye on what is going on in the Community. My hon. Friend is extremely lucky, because he is particularly powerful, having a very close relationship with the leader of the Conservative group in the European Parliament and also with the vice-president of the European People's party, Christopher Prout.

Mr. Cash: I am glad that my hon. Friend has raised that point, because I have just been taking a few pot shots at the European People's party. I do not think that its aspirations to a united states of Europe fit terribly easily with the aspirations of the voters of the United Kingdom.

Furthermore, I do not believe for one minute that there is any reason for not having a reasonable, proper and mutual relationship between MEPs and hon. Members, provided that they can genuinely claim to be in the same party. Having said that, the relationship should be one of contact, not of an increase in the powers of the Members of the European Parliament along the lines set out in this treaty and this Bill, which are all movements towards, as the treaty says, a treaty on European union. I wish people would face the fact that what the treaty says is more important than some of the attempts to camouflage it.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am grateful to my hon. Friend and neighbour for giving way. He knows full well that Sir Christopher Prout not only would welcome more regular contact with him, but is not a supporter of a federal Europe. It is quite wrong and disingenuous of him to put it on the record that he is when he is not.

Mr. Cash: I will not ascribe views to individuals, but some difficulty is created by the marriage to which I referred, and which the European People's party and our own Members of the European Parliament have mentioned in a press release, in which they talk about a marriage between them being consummated during our general election, when the European People's party is quite clearly in favour of, and has the specific objective of, a united states of Europe. It is in its statutes.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend really must come off it. He and I are members of the same party. Cannot Sir Christopher Prout be a member of a party in which people have rather different views from him?

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman will know that I have not made any specific reference to the views of an individual. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) is pressing that point.

I am talking about the relationship between the European People's party and the Conservative party. That institutional question goes to the heart of article 138a which says:

"Political parties at European level are important as a factor for integration within the Union."

The European People's party is manifestly a political party at European level, which is important as a factor for integration within the union because it espouses a united states of Europe. Nothing could be clearer than that.

Sir Russell Johnston: I wish, as always, to be of assistance to the hon. Gentleman in his dialogue with the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). Surely there is a big difference between two members being members of the same long-established party and someone who makes a conscious decision to join another party which, as the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said, has federalism as a clear objective.

Mr. Cash: I am bound to agree with the hon. Gentleman, because it is a deliberate change of direction. I cannot understand it. It causes me, and, indeed, many other people, considerable concern.

In an article in *The Daily Telegraph* shortly after the consummation of this marriage, Lord Bethell, who is a member of the European Parliament, set out in an honest way the difficulties which were inherent in that significant shift of position.

Nevertheless, it is an important matter and it goes to the heart of article 138a, considering the importance of the Conservative party to the people in the United Kingdom and those of us who, in terms of this treaty, would regard our position as firmly based on the principles of Conservatism and of the Tory party. In standing up for our constitutional arrangements and for the voters, we do not want to see these powers shifted in the direction to which the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber referred.

Voters will continue to insist on their right, not out of any theoretical, theological or even constitutional approach but simply because the basis on which we are elected represents a practical footing on which we can serve our constituents. When our constituents make decisions, the decisions are truly theirs, as reflected through Members of Parliament in this House and Ministers who form the Government. That will be taken away under stage 2 of economic and monetary union.

Stage 2 will come into effect on 1 January 1994. If the treaty is ratified, it is barely nine months until the provisions take effect. It is precisely for those reasons, and many others, that I object so strongly to the provisions of the treaty.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): Does my hon. Friend believe that those on both Front Benches appreciate the full impact of the treaty's provisions? Having recently returned from Denmark, I know that the understanding of the Danish people of the impact of the Maastricht treaty is extremely different from our perception of its impact in the United Kingdom. Does my hon. Friend believe that those on the Front Benches realise the dramatic constitutional changes which will result from this amendment?

6.45 pm

Mr. Cash: From the way in which the debate has been conducted, I have the gravest doubts whether that point is fully appreciated and understood. I would go further and say that the idea of our handing over those powers—the right of decision and the freedom of choice of our voters—to other arrangements would create a completely new dimension, which would break down the basis on which our democratic system operates.

It is a snare and a delusion that the transfer of powers could, in the context of the European Parliament, be conducted by such remote-controlled methods as having people from the 12 member states—it is intended to increase the number of member states possibly to 20 or 35—sitting in chambers, all with completely different languages and not being able to debate matters as we do in the House but by reading out almost set speeches, and thus provide the democratic cohesive force for the people of Europe.

The whole system would collapse—not only would monetary union collapse, but the democratic system would not bear it. It would not be a proper democratic system. It would be a camouflage, it would be cosmetic and it would be an invitation to authoritarianism, partly because the powers would be conferred on unelected bankers, partly because the monetary union would collapse and partly because there would be no sufficient democratic system to sustain decisions. It would be an invitation to a form of fascism.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman's arguments would have much more validity and credibility if he did not belong to and support a Government who are in the process of privatising government in the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) talked about accountability of this Parliament to the constituents outside and the possibility of constituents coming here with complaints, yet they entirely support the process of privatising government in the United Kingdom. For example, all hon. Members know that one cannot go directly to the Secretary of State for Social Security with problems: one must go to one of the agencies which have been set up. At least my hon. Friends are defending the powers of this Parliament from a non-hypocritical base.

Mr. Cash: I have some difficulty in understanding the connection between privatisation and the powers of the European Parliament, the European Commission and so on. In passing, I would say that privatisation appears to be popular in other parts of the European Community and I hope it succeeds.

Mr. Hoon: I shall take the hon. Gentleman back a little. Far be it from me to intervene in Staffordshire squabbles. Will not the hon. Gentleman have a little difficulty next year in the European elections because, having criticised the European People's party so forcibly, his party is in the process of agreeing to a joint manifesto with the European People's party, and because Conservative candidates will stand on that manifesto? How will the hon. Gentleman vote in support of those candidates?

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman is raising a problem which is not of my making. I am merely pointing out the increasing contradictions of this continuing process, as I have done in the past two or three years in private meetings, party meetings upstairs and, indeed, on the Floor of the House. I have the greatest difficulty in understanding how the matter will be resolved, because at the bottom line there is a fundamental contradiction.

At the party conference, the Prime Minister said that we would not have a federal Europe—over our dead bodies, as it were. At the same time, we have an arrangement under which Conservative Members of the European Parliament will join the European People's party. Politics is full of strange chemistries and I have no doubt that somebody will try to resolve them. I simply regard the matter as extremely unfortunate and regrettable. I sincerely hope that the process, which has gone too far already, will be reversed.

Mr. Gapes: Could the hon. Gentleman perhaps explain why the Conservative party spent so much time trying to join the European People's party and why the former Member for Bath was so determined to sign up to an organisation which, in its policy statements, committed its member parties to work for the federal Europe which the hon. Member for Stafford so detests? Could the hon. Gentleman give us his views on that matter?

Mr. Cash: I found it somewhat surprising that Mr. Volker Rühe canvassed on behalf of my erstwhile right hon. Friend in his constituency, but I hope that friendship betokened more than a complete symmetry of policy.

Mr. Cormack: I canvassed in my hon. Friend's by-election.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend says that he canvassed in my by-election, for which I shall remain eternally grateful, just as I am grateful to him for teaching me that I should refer to "Parlee-ament" rather than "Parliament".

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend correctly says that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at the party conference that we would enter a federal Europe over his dead body. Is it possible that my right hon. Friend's speech writer was misinformed when he wrote the speech? I understand that the Prime Minister also said at the party conference:

"Immigration? Immigration policy is specifically excluded under the Maastricht Treaty."

Title VI says that immigration policy can be a European policy

"on the initiative of any Member State or of the Commission".

The treaty says under article K that the Commission should be associated with immigration policy. So my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was misled at least once or twice by the speech writer who wrote his speech for the party conference.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It is obvious that my appeal a few moments ago for short interventions has fallen on deaf ears. I shall not fail to intervene from now on if interventions are too long.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North reminds me of the constitutional adage, "The King can do no wrong," so we must assume that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been sadly misled by his advisers on this matter. But that also applies to the legal basis on which we have been proceeding with the treaty. The division of powers among the Parliament, the Commission, the Council of Ministers and the Court of Auditors, all of which are matters within this grouping of amendments, depends on the legal and constitutional nature of the attributes which will be given to the various treaty articles, not merely as a matter of opinion but as a matter of law.

We are creating a legal framework. The European Court of Justice will have jurisdiction in the matters that we are discussing. There will be a new judocracy. Decisions will be taken by political judges. We shall undoubtedly deal with the European Court of Justice in a further group of amendments. On their own admission, the Government got their legal advice badly wrong in respect of the social chapter and the constitutional implications of amendment No. 27—whether it would wreck the treaty. As I have said repeatedly, and written on several occasions, the basis on which the treaty has been devised and sold to the British electorate is based on completely wrong legal advice.

The Maastricht treaty is a centralising measure and nothing else. It is apparent to people throughout Europe that it is a centralising treaty. They want it to be a centralising treaty. Yet we continually hear from those who wish the treaty to be ratified that it is not. They will say so until the moment comes when the final page of the treaty and the debates are closed—if that ever happens —but then we shall be told that of course the treaty had the consequences which we predicted. There will be no way of preventing those consequences.

Mr. Hoon *indicated assent.*

Mr. Cash: I see the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) nodding his head. He knows that what I say is true.

He has a distinctive contribution to make to our debates, because he knows and understands the current thinking in Europe probably better than anyone else in the House. I have listened to his interesting speeches with great care because he can tell us a great deal about what is really going on. He knows, as I do, that the treaty is a centralising measure to create a European union.

Many people do not want us to say a word. They want us to keep quiet. They want us to say nothing to the people of Britain. Yet we shall say what we have to say, because we are telling the truth about the treaty.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend said a few moments ago that Volker Rühe had canvassed in the constituency of my former right hon. Friend who sadly lost his seat at the last election. He also said that the treaty had been sold to the British people under a particular prospectus. Does he believe that there is any connection between the sad loss of the Bath seat by the Conservative party and the fact that the gentleman to whom my hon. Friend referred canvassed for our former right hon. Friend?

Mr. Cash: Far be it for me to imagine for a moment that that might have been the case. However, there appears to be some connection. I am sure that it was based on friendship and hope, rather than any comity of political interests.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My hon. Friend knows, as I know, that the anti-market candidate in Bath obtained about 140 votes. That answers the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton).

Does my hon. Friend accept that his misleading claim that the treaty is a centralising measure is a fig leaf for the fact that he voted for the Single European Act, which was, in many senses, a centralising measure, and which introduced qualified majority voting? The Maastricht treaty restrains those powers. The treaty of European union underlines that the treaty of Rome is no longer simply a pillar around which European union is built: there are intergovernmental pillars too. My hon. Friend has got it all wrong.

Mr. Cash: I am always delighted to take an intervention from my hon. Friend. He and I debate these matters in the House and in public meetings both within and outside the House. Clearly, we arrive at different conclusions. However, I wish that at least on one occasion my hon. Friend would be good enough to explain how the creation of a central bank for the whole of Europe, with all the powers set out, does not centralise. When he can answer that question——

Mr. Ian Taylor: Wait for my speech.

Mr. Cash: I hope that his speech will address that question. It is impossible to prove that a central bank for the whole of Europe such as that devised under the Maastricht treaty is not a centralising bank, and therefore that the treaty is not a centralising measure. I have the greatest difficulty in understanding my hon. Friend's point, but I am perfectly prepared to listen to his argument later.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): My hon. Friend's emphasis on the centralising nature of the treaty is sound. Under article 3b, once it is discovered that a matter is within the exclusive competence of the Community, it will not be possible to consider subsidiarity. So subsidiarity as a means of destroying centralisation will operate in a minute sector.

Mr. Cash: I agree with my hon. Friend. There is a double deception in the concept, first, that the treaty is not a centralising measure, and, secondly, that we can fall back on subsidiarity. As my hon. Friend will recall, one of the prime tenets of subsidiarity and one of its so-called attractions is that it will bring decisions closer to the citizen. Nothing could possibly take powers further from the citizen—his most important power is his right to vote —than to transfer the power to make decisions on monetary matters, which is accumulated in aggregate among the voters in a general election, and hand them over to unelected, unaccountable bankers. The whole thing is not only a contradiction but a fraud. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), for that and many other reasons.

Mr. Marlow: May I say with all the sincerity that I can bring to bear that we forgive my hon. Friend for voting for the Single European Act. I remember the circumstances. We were told that the Act was all to do with the single market and nothing else. Now we are told that that was when we sold the pass and gave away the power. The Government told us one thing then and tell us another thing now. Now they tell us that Maastricht is not a centralising treaty. Do we believe them?

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend gets very exercised over this point. With respect to the Single European Act, there is a fundamental difference between that treaty and this. It lies in this point.

Mr. Ian Taylor: I have caught my hon. Friend on a raw nerve.

7 pm

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor) says that he caught me on a raw nerve. If the day comes that people think they have caught me on a raw nerve on this subject, it will be a day to remember. It is not going to happen. I have no problem with the Single European Act. The Maastricht treaty is primarily about government; the Single European Act is primarily about trading relations.

The qualified majority voting and trading arrangements which are within the Single European Act were necessary, in my judgment, for freeing trading relations within Europe. I have no difficulty with that, in principle, in law or in practice. Unfortunately, the Single European Act and the single market have been in need of considerable improvement. Unfortunately, the opportunity was not taken in the run-up to the Maastricht treaty to create a level playing field and get rid of the wrinkles that exist. I am glad that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry is looking into this, and I hope that its report will be well worth reading.

Mr. Lord: We know how difficult it is for people outside the Committee to understand what we are talking about. I am deeply concerned about some very simple things which are being missed or confused, deliberately or accidentally. My hon. Friend is touching on one now. The common market, the single European Act, is one issue, mostly to do with trade. What we are talking about now is European union and political union. It is an entirely

[Mr. Lord]

different matter. Sometimes Ministers at the Dispatch Box will say that Members of this House are in favour of the Maastricht treaty or that they want to come out of Europe altogether. The truth is that the views of most people in this country lie exactly between those two extremes. They want a common market, and they want nothing to do with the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Cash: I could not agree more. There has been a significant smear campaign on the basis that some of us who want this country to be taken out of the single market. I find that extraordinary, because we all know that the arrangements, the treaty obligations, between the 12 member states lock us and the other member states into an arrangement under the Single European Act, which amended the treaty of Rome, from which the other member states cannot legally withdraw.

Therefore, without our agreement, we would continue to remain in the single market and it is a complete and utter disgrace that some people go around—I do not know who they are, but we hear about them—suggesting that those of us who do not want the Maastricht treaty to go through could in some way damage the prospects of British business by our being forced out of the single market. That is untrue and unsustainable. I see that the Minister of State is bobbing up and down, and I am more than delighted to give way, as ever.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In order to help my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord), just in case any misapprehension is allowed to take root that the Single European Act was simply about the common market, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) who supported it will confirm, will he not, among the many other political objectives and achievements of the Single European Act is that it was there that European political co-operation, the beginning of what we now call the common foreign security policy, was set up. That is an achievement which our right hon. and noble Friend Lady Thatcher claimed as her own, in this very Chamber.

Mr. Cash: Indeed. I am glad to be able to confirm that I entirely agree; while my right hon. Friend was out of the Chamber I referred to that point. The point he makes—that the Single Act provides for a degree of political co-operation—is a provision to which I did not object at the time. My concern is that this treaty takes the whole situation to a completely different dimension.

Irrespective of this illusion that we are now going to create new pillars outside the treaty of Rome—which, as I have said in previous debates, do not touch the substance of the matter—that we would be locked into European guidelines and joint action plans and things like that which will deny us the control over our own affairs that we at present enjoy and which I think we should keep—I am happy to give way to the Minister again.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The general point I am trying to establish, as a help to my hon. Friend and our hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central, is that it is simply an illusion to pretend that the Single European Act was only about the single market. It was about a great deal more than that; I have simply cited European political co-operation as one area. My hon. Friend is right to point out that it was inevitable, when such a huge amount of qualified majority voting was allowed under the Single European Act, that we should seek, and have successfully achieved in a number of areas such as transport and training, to claw back a simple majority and push it up to qualified majority voting. Admirable though the Single European Act was, we have discovered some defects in it, on which we have sought to improve in the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Cash: I do not think my right hon. Friend has managed to do anything of the kind. What we have experienced is concessions dressed up as negotiations. The reality is that, although the single market, as my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Lord) said, is at the heart of the Single European Act, there are a number of peripheral matters and some increased political co-operation which I was prepared to go along with. However, there was nothing of the kind in this treaty.

The Minister will know that title II of the Single European Act, which deals—in brackets, I may add—with the words "economic and monetary union", is based on co-operation. These powers are carefully constrained. Were they not, and if the Minister were correct in his argument, there would be no need for this treaty and for this Bill. If they did everything that the Minister is now claiming for the Single European Act, we would have no need of this treaty. Then we would really be wasting our time.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): Some of us in this Chamber did not vote for the Single European Act even at that time, but we were then promised that it would mean, I think the term was, thousands of jobs for the United Kingdom. We now hear from our right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that, if we do not sign the Maastricht treaty, we shall lose thousands of jobs. Can my hon. Friend or any other Member quote any jobs which will be lost if we do not ratify the treaty? I do not know of any.

Mr. Cash: The one thing that would worry me, and does worry me, about signing this treaty is that the political union that is being created is a powerful motive force towards protectionism. If anybody, including the Minister for Industry who is about to pop up, imagines that the idea that we would be able to sustain the harm that would come from the protectionism of a fortress Europe, given the present state of mind in the United States and elsewhere—if those tariff barriers were put up against us and if we were to remember, as we should, that we are running a deficit of £15 billion a year with the European Community—and if, in addition to that loss, we were to find ourselves hemmed in by that Maastricht-type community, with all the protectionism that many of us fear, we would lose all that external and global trading which would decimate the very areas which are most prosperous in our manufacturing and other industries.

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) about jobs that might be lost. It is quite clear that the great success that Britain has had in attracting inward investment, particularly from Japan and the United States, is substantially attributable to companies from those countries wishing to locate in Britain because we are part of the single market and play a central role in the way that market operates and develops. I find it

strange that my hon. Friend seems willing to ignore the almost universal view of industry that signing the Maastricht treaty would be a major advantage to industry and employment.

Mr. Cash: I find the Minister's intervention most interesting. Only recently, a senior diplomat from one of the largest Commonwealth countries told me that he was concerned about protectionism and the dangers to his country's investments in the United Kingdom, and vice versa, of our going down that route. However, perhaps I should return to the institutions and get away from the implications of the powers of the single market.

Mr. Marlow: Was it not grossly insulting to our European partners for the Minister to make those remarks? We are and wish to remain part of the single market, and our European partners have treaty obligations with regard to the single market. If we do not sign the Maastricht treaty, how can the single market be taken from us? If I can move on to another point that was mentioned by my right hon. Friend——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is testing my patience now. I hope that it is not necessary for me to intervene again. I ask Mr. Cash to continue his speech.

Mr. Knapman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Cash: Not this time. I think that you, Mr. Lofthouse, would appreciate it if, for a short time, we had fewer interventions.

I wish to examine the nature of the Commission. The idea that the European Commission is simply a bureaucratic body stuffed with civil servants is a gross misrepresentation. It is grossly over-represented by bureaucratic officials, but the Commissioners are all politicians, not merely civil servants.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I apologise for intervening so frequently in his speech, but the Committee will be interested to pursue this point. He continues to believe that the Single European Act was a good treaty, we could stand by it and it would serve our interests. He owes it to the House and the country, as he is advocating non-ratification of this treaty, to tell us whether he has discussed the prospect of sitting on the Single European Act with other member states, with people he can name or with our right hon. and noble Friend Lord Tebbit? If he is putting forward an alternative strategy for our country, he has an obligation to the Committee to tell us what it is.

Mr. Shore: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Some of us are finding it rather tiresome to have the debate focused on the irrelevancies of the Single European Act when the subject of the debate is clearly the institutions and the effect of the Maastricht treaty upon them.

The First Deputy Chairman: I note the right hon. Gentleman's point, and I agree with him.

Mr. Cash: It is most important that we should concentrate upon the institutional powers, but the Minister has a total obsession with the Single European Act, and he continually refers back to it. However, we are patient, and we have a good sense of humour. As the Minister is about to retire from his present post, he will soon have other things to occupy him, so we can put up with him, at any rate for the time being.

The Commission is not simply a bureaucratic body, because the Commissioners are politicians. We have already seen the difficulties encountered by Mr. Ray MacSharry and Mr. Jacques Delors and other Commissioners when they put their national interests ahead of their commitment to the European Commission.

7.15 pm

I understand that we are now to increase considerably the powers of the European Commission. The Minister and others claim that we are cutting back on those powers, but that is not my impression. The Commission's right of initiative is in no way altered under the treaty. The idea that the Commission will somehow exercise less power under the new arrangements than under the Single European Act is a complete illusion.

Dr. Godman: A few moments ago, the hon. Gentleman urged us to be patient. As one of his more patient listeners here tonight, may I ask when he will come to the heart of the matter, which is the distribution of political power among the institutions and parliaments of the European Community? Any enhancement of the power of the European Parliament must to some extent lead to a diminution in the power exercised by other institutions, and perhaps national parliaments.

Mr. Cash: I have already dealt with that point, but I am happy to remind the hon. Gentleman of it. He must have been out of the Chamber at the time.

Dr. Godman: I have not left the Chamber.

Mr. Cash: In that case, he has not been listening carefully.

The powers of the national parliament should not simply have been relegated to a protocol, an annex or an agreement at the back of the treaty. They should have been at its centre if the treaty were to have any self-respect whatsoever. The powers of national parliaments in relation to the European Community needed to be increased, not reduced. The encouragement that our Government were supposed to give other member states to increase the scrutiny and quality of European legislation by means of proper investigation by elected representatives of the people should have been a prime objective in filling the democratic deficit contained in the treaty.

The treaty is authoritarian, undemocratic and socialist in most of its characteristics. There is something fundamentally wrong with the basis on which the treaty was negotiated and the point made by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is entirely valid. The object of the treaty is not to increase democracy in Europe. Far from it: it is to create an impression that democracy will be increased. But there is not real determination to increase the powers of national parliaments within the European Community.

If there had been a real commitment to it, all member states would have been required to scrutinise the legislation properly in the way in which we do in Britain, even if we do so somewhat imperfectly. In France, it is done by decree, and in many member states there is no serious attempt to investigate it. That system is a travesty for Europe, let alone for the United Kingdom.

[Mr. Cash]

I agree with the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow. For many years we have both been members of the Select Committee on European Legislation and know that other member states are somewhat less effective in their scrutiny of such legislation, even allowing for the fact that we could doubtless improve our efforts.

Dr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): In what way is Danish scrutiny less effective than ours? I should have thought that it was infinitely more effective.

Mr. Cash: I am delighted that the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright), who is also a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, has mentioned the Danish Parliament, and I agree that the Folketing is a first-class Parliament. The Westminster and Danish Parliaments are at the end of the queue for ratification because we are both determined to scrutinise the legislation properly, even though hon. Members on both sides of the House wish that we would not do so. They are trying to deny the people of this country the opportunity of a debate, because they are not participating in it.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): The hon. Gentleman was not in the House in 1972 when the original European Communities Bill was enacted. Those who were will recollect that many of us tried to amend that Bill to provide the sort of safeguards that have not been provided. The amendment was defeated by the then Conservative Government.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman merely reaffirms the disgraceful way in which the Danish people have been treated. Their constitution allowed a referendum, which clearly should have dispatched the matter, but certain people were not prepared to accept the result, so they will have to have another. Dubious and questionable opt-outs are being scrutinised by lawyers throughout Europe, not least in Denmark.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): It is a bit thick for the hon. Gentleman to say that it was disgraceful that the referendum result was not accepted, as his stand is a rejection of the referendum result in this country.

Mr. Cash: I am having great difficulty in understanding what the hon. Gentleman is saying—perhaps I had better pass on to another subject. He seems to think that we have had a referendum on the treaty. I would advocate such a referendum. Perhaps he was giving me an inkling of what he would really like. If we had a referendum on mere trading arrangements in 1975, I am sure that he would agree that we should have one on the Maastricht arrangements. I am indebted to him for his remarks.

Mr. Rowe: The oft-repeated assertion that the referendum was held on trading arrangements simply does not stand examination. One only has to consider the publicity posted through letterboxes during the referendum, the White Paper and all the debates to realise that that suggestion does not stand examination.

Mr. Cash: The 1970 White Paper is the strangest joke to have been perpetrated on the people of this country. It is extraordinary to suggest that that White Paper was not riddled with deception. At the time, we were assured that there would be no erosion of national sovereignty, no federation and no loss of a veto. Even the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) must understand, from studying the provisions in the White Paper, that what we face now is diametrically opposed to what was contained in it. If I were him, I would not call on the White Paper to aid my arguments.

Mr. Lord: Is not that the issue that is causing all the confusion? My hon. Friend was making a point about the referendum, but that was held on the European Economic Community—the common market. The people of this country voted for a common market, and that is what they understand. They did not vote for anything else, which is why——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It might be a good idea for the Committee to return to the subject of institutions.

Mr. Cash: Although my hon. Friend's argument is important and reasonable, because of the difference between the arrangements that we entered into between 1970 and 1975 and those in the treaty, the key point about this part of the Bill is that European institutions would be granted increased powers which would cover all aspects of government, whereas in the 1975 referendum we voted primarily on trading arrangements.

Another aspect of the question of institutional powers is the degree of independence of the Commission. Throughout Europe, institutional arrangements are moving towards more power for unelected and unaccountable officials, who will determine questions that should be determined by the people of the respective countries. That is one reason why there is so much anxiety about the Maastricht treaty and the way in which those powers have been growing. Unelected and unaccountable bankers, Commission officials and members of the Court of Justice are included in the provisions. Some Members wish to ignore that but the treaty significantly increases the powers of the Court of Justice, the Commission and the other bureaucratic institutions.

There is no question of the powers of the European Parliament filling the democratic deficit that is being created, and there is no doubt that the powers of bankers and the Court of Justice are increasing. Some hon. Members are dealing with such issues, but there is no evidence that Ministers and many other hon. Members appreciate the extent to which they are handing over the running of this country to people who have not been elected and will not be accountable—people who do not necessarily have any interest in the way in which we are governed.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): The hon. Gentleman is trying to create the illusion that there will be no constraints on the shift in power from member states to the Community. He has not mentioned article 3b and the way in which powers will be constrained. I refer him to the words:

"The Community shall act within the limits of the powers conferred".

The text also makes it clear that the onus of proof that powers should be removed from member states is on those who would remove them—not the other way around. That represents an important restriction on the ability to shift powers, and the hon. Gentleman has not referred to it at all.

Mr. Cash: The results that the hon. Gentleman hopes for from subsidiarity will not be forthcoming. By definition, subsidiarity assumes centralisation; otherwise, there would be nothing to which it could apply. It is a cosmetic exercise: it is a con trick. It is an attempt to give the impression that there will be a greater diffusion of powers to lower levels, whereas in practice the real concession is to the centralising tendencies of the unelected Commission, Court of Justice and bankers. There will be far less opportunity for subsidiarity to take effect than the hon. Gentleman would like. From all the areas in which exclusive competence has been granted under the treaty to these institutions and bodies, subsidiarity is automatically excluded, so there is little to which it can be meaningfully attached.

People are running around trying to tear up, for the time being, several European directives, but they are not changing the powers being granted under this treaty—a treaty which will greatly increase the powers both of the institutions and of the Community itself.

I regard this group of amendments as yet another reason for my decision, already taken, that I do not want us to ratify this treaty, which is centralising, undemocratic, authoritarian and socialist in all its main characteristics.

7.30 pm

Mr. Shore: I have wondered at times during this two and a half hour debate whether we have focused clearly enough on the question of the institutions. I shall try to be brief and to the point.

Against the background of a treaty of a federal character, which is what this treaty is, it is inevitable that the institutions set up under the Rome treaty and subsequent treaties and under the treaty of union should be strengthened. The powers of the union, the powers of the quasi-state, are expressed, after all, in its institutions. The institutions which most clearly reflect the federal character of the treaty are the European Parliament and the Commission.

I turn first, however, to the Council of Ministers. Both it and its powers are certainly affected by what is contained in the Maastricht treaty. Virtually the only safeguard that the nation state has against encroachment by Community powers under the Rome treaty is the unanimity rule—that is to say, the rule under which the agreement of all Ministers representing member states has to be obtained before a directive becomes law and before policy is implemented.

The trouble is that the unanimity rule is being weakened all the time—first, and unfortunately, under the Single European Act. I shall not go into a great debate about that, but under it the rule was removed from a whole range of areas, especially those affecting the creation of a single market.

The Maastricht treaty removes the unanimity rule from areas of policy to which it used to apply—and from all the areas listed under article 3, for which new competence is handed over to the European Community.

Mr. Hoon: The treaty as originally drafted provided for qualified majority voting. The unanimity rule to which my right hon. Friend refers was developed in a form known as the Luxembourg compromise by member states; it was a practice, not a rule in the way that he implies.

Mr. Shore: I respect my hon. Friend's knowledge of the treaties, but I think that he will find that, apart from the famous Gaullist Luxembourg compromise, the treaty of Rome contains far more articles requiring the unanimity rule than articles requiring qualified majority voting. We need not argue too long about that, however. The important thing is to note the new areas of Community competence.

First there are the old ones: agriculture, fisheries, transport, common commercial policy, free movement of goods, persons and services. Then there are the new areas: economic and social cohesion, environment policy, research and technology development, development of trans-European networks, health protection, contribution to education and training, policy in the sphere of development co-operation, contribution to the strengthening of consumer protection, and energy, civil protection and tourism measures. Nearly all these are new policy areas brought under the qualified majority voting procedures as developed under articles 189b and 189c of the Maastricht treaty.

It follows that the ability of a Minister on the Council of Ministers to veto developments, given the new and wider areas of treaty competence, has been removed. Ministers can no longer veto or demand unanimity. Wherever qualified majority voting is agreed, the powers of national Parliaments to hold Ministers to account are virtually abandoned, because Ministers can always turn up and say, "I did my best but I was outvoted by a qualified majority vote; I could not stick to the position which I know my own Parliament wanted me to retain."

As we are to deal separately in another debate with economic and monetary union and with all three stages thereof, I need not do more than mention the qualified majority voting in economic and monetary union, which is also enshrined in the treaty. That union covers matters of great importance.

I want to mention the powers of the Commission and also to focus mainly on the European Parliament. The powers of the Commission are also extended to all the new competences established under the Maastricht amendments to the Rome treaty. The Commission retains its powers as sole initiator of policy and its responsibility for enforcement. In one area, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) mentioned, under stage 3 of economic and monetary union the Commission is given powers of a formidable kind. They are powers to propose fines and penalties for member states when it is held that they are in breach of treaty obligations. That will lead to an interesting shift in the power relations between the Commission and the Council of Ministers.

The most important changes, however, are in the powers and procedures of the European Parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton began referring to the right of petition and the establishment of the office of ombudsman. Those are trivial powers, and I do not believe the European Parliament needs the Maastricht treaty to establish such rights and offices. Indeed, petition rights are already in force, so I thought it rather odd to concentrate on the most trivial of all the increased powers given to the European Parliament.

The more important aspects of the European Parliament's powers are the procedures under articles 189b and 189c of the treaty. Under article 189b, the so-called co-decision procedure greatly elevates the powers of the European Parliament in relation to the Council of

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Ministers and to the Commission. Henceforth, under article 189b—this includes those matters which are to be resolved by the procedures set out in the article—the European Parliament will have the right to reject a Council proposal, whether it is a majority, a qualified majority or a unanimous decision. The Parliament will have the right to reject the proposal outright by means of a majority vote of its Members. After all procedures have been exhausted, the European Parliament still possesses the right—on Third Reading, as it were—to vote down a Council proposal.

As the Committee will know, a conciliation committee is to be established, with equal numbers from the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, to negotiate differences between the two bodies when amendments have been proposed and not accepted. This represents a substantial shift of power in favour of the European Parliament.

Extension of powers will not stop there. It is interesting and significant to read paragraph 8 of article 189b, which states:

"The scope of the procedure under this Article may be widened, in accordance with the procedure provided for in Article N(2) of the Treaty on European Union, on the basis of a report to be submitted to the Council by the Commission by 1996 at the latest."

There we have it. By "1996 at the latest" there will be brought forward to the Council a proposal for changing or developing further the procedure of co-decision. Undoubtedly, the Council will be in favour of enhancing the powers of the Parliament.

Mr. Hoon: Does my right hon. Friend accept that in practice the powers of the European Parliament to which he refers, because they are negative, are extremely difficult to exercise? If the European Parliament rejects a legislative proposal, that is the abandonment of, probably, many years of legislative effort. The existing powers to reject legislation have seldom been exercised.

Mr. Shore: The European Parliament has the power to stymie the Council of Ministers. I think that I agree with my hon. Friend because I believe that this will be an unsatisfactory procedure. I am not in the least surprised, therefore, that provisions are already in place to allow for further amendment and development, which I think will be along the way that I have suggested—increased power for the European Parliament.

Given the importance of the new procedure for co-decision under article 189b, and taking account of the long periods—three months and an additional six weeks—allowed for reaching agreement between the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers, I and others have tabled new clause 21, to which I draw the attention of the Committee. It requires that a report shall be made to the United Kingdom Parliament whenever a common position agreed by the Council of Ministers has been rejected by the European Parliament but is still within the negotiating frame. The new clause will give the House of Commons a decent opportunity to question and challenge Ministers on their policy and on the new policy that they intend to adopt in the light of a veto, or the threat of a veto, by the European Parliament.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I ask my right hon. Friend a question from the pro-European position. Given his experience as a distinguished Secretary of State for the Environment—one of the successful ones of the past two decades—does he accept that there is an argument for having a European-based policy on pollution which can be enforced? We know from the east German experience that pollution knows no frontiers.

7.45 pm

Mr. Shore: The strongest case is the environmental one, but I put it to my hon. Friend that there is an entirely unthought-through division, as it were, of responsibilities for environmental matters now in the hands of the Community which should reside in the United Kingdom. We must decide whether we are to have more roads running through the United Kingdom. Similarly, we must determine our policy towards flora and fauna and the protection of them. That is our responsibility, and we should exercise it. Unfortunately, we sometimes fail to do so. We should not hand over such powers to a European body.

On the other hand, there must be some shared responsibilities—for example, the regulation of shipping in the channel. I suspect, however, that most of the environmental matters that my hon. Friend and I are concerned about are not for determination by the Community. That is because they are international matters. We must reach out and make major decisions and agreements on the ozone layer and other issues that concern us as citizens of the United Kingdom, of western Europe and of the world. We have a responsibility, and that should influence us. The idea that all these matters should be crammed into or transferred to a European body is nonsensical.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am listening carefully to the right hon. Gentleman, who is touching on something that is of importance to the Committee and, indeed, to the House of Commons. He is talking about how the House of Commons will scrutinise and undertake its level of responsibility in all matters European. The right hon. Gentleman will know that it is rare for an element of procedure to be included in an Act of Parliament. The right hon. Gentleman's argument surprises me because he knows that appropriate Standing Committees have been established, which are doing their work. The House of Commons may wish to improve on those Committees as it gains experience. I would be surprised to see a piece of legislation—an Act of Parliament which is essentially a European Act of Parliament to do with Europe—dictating the procedures of the House of Commons. That which the right hon. Gentleman is suggesting may be sensible—indeed, it is the proper route for the House of Commons to take—but it does not need to be told to follow it in an Act of Parliament. I would contend that such a measure would slightly inhibit the House of Commons.

Mr. Shore: The Minister is advancing an argument similar to the one that he adduced earlier when he said that he did not understand why any Act or any intervention should be introduced or made to take place which bore on our procedures, even if it meant the simple requirements of an annual report and a debate. I do not agree. The accountability of Ministers when operating in a European context should be made plain at an early stage. I agree that

much can be done by implementing the procedures of the House of Commons, and those procedures should be clear in our minds at that early stage.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No, I will not. It is a relatively small point. It is not the substance or essence of the matter, which rests with the powers of the European institutions.

Mr. Dykes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No, I shall be rigorous.

I have quoted from articles 189b and c, which are important, but I want to look further ahead. Anyone who has followed the debates and resolutions of the European Parliament can have no doubt about its ambitions for the structure of the European union which it so tirelessly advocates.

In a resolution passed on 7 April 1992—after the Maastricht treaty had been signed in Maastricht—the European Parliament gave its verdict on the treaty in one of the enormously lengthy resolutions that it passes and clearly foreshadowed its future course of action. The task, as it put it, was to

"transform the network of relations between the peoples and member countries into a European Union on a Federal basis, based on a draft constitution drawn up by the European Parliament in co-operation with the National Parliaments."

The resolution was approved by a clear majority of the European Parliament, to which the Institutional Affairs Committee, as it is called, reported.

Mr. Rogers: My right hon. Friend draws attention to the recent resolution on the intentions of the European Parliament. However, since 1979 when the directly-elected Parliament came into existence, there have been similar resolutions on a number of occasions, the most famous of which resulted in the adoption of the Spinelli report in the early 1980s, which set out a blueprint for European federalism and is the basis of the Single European Act and the European Communities (Amendment) Bill. There is no doubt at all about the intentions. Whether one agrees with them is another matter.

Mr. Shore: It is important that we do know what the intentions are. Federalism is not the recessive part of the European movement, but the dominant part. Federalism is openly espoused on the continent of Europe in virtually every country and it has the backing and blessing of most governmental leaders of the member countries of the EC.

The resolution continued—I quote again because it is important—as follows:

"to begin already preparations for a new revision of the Treaties which would aim to eliminate the shortcomings of the Treaty of Maastricht."

No time is to be wasted. Maastricht has not yet been ratified. Finally, it instructs its Institutions Committee

"to complete its preparation of a draft constitution for the European Union."

That was in April 1992 and the European Parliament has moved on since then. The main work has been done by its so-called Institutions Committee and its report on "Structure and Strategy" for European union was agreed by the European Parliament as recently as 20 January this year. Once again, I think that the House should be given some information on the content of that document.

Mr. Gapes: My right hon. Friend will know, because we were at the same meeting a few weeks ago with members of the institutions committee of the European Parliament, that that was the aspiration. As my right hon. Friend said earlier, that had clearly been the aspiration for many years. Nevertheless, it is clear that a change in the treaty will require an inter-governmental conference and a process in 1996 or 1997.

Mr. Shore: Yes, we know that. I am simply making the intention plain to the House—the fact that it has the support of the majority of the European Parliament, the fact that the same federal thrust is backed by the Heads of Government of most of the countries of the EC, and that it is perfectly plain to everyone except the Government and their supporters that that is the real intention. All the people who are serious about federalism in Europe and want it do not deny that for a moment. That is true of the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston). He is a federalist, recognises federalism when he sees it and does not try to hide the consequences of what we are doing. I much respect his position, but I have no respect at all for those who pretend and dare not face the British people and the House with the real purposes that they have in mind.

Mr. Dykes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No.

Mr. Dykes: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. The right hon. Gentleman said that he would be rigorous and not give way. He has now given way to two colleagues but will not give way to a Conservative Member who has a legitimate question.

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that that is not a point of order for me. It is a matter for the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) whether he gives way.

Mr. Shore: I want to develop some of the main points contained in the document on "Structure and Strategy" for European union. It is of interest to the House to know the following. With regard to the Council of Ministers, the document says:

"its development into a second legislative chamber in the sense of a genuine chamber of states and alongside the European Parliament must be accelerated, with it becoming a standing body of the Union, its meetings on legislative matters held in public and taking majority decisions and co-decisions and on an equal footing with the European Parliament."

Those words are particularly important. So the Council becomes a second legislative chamber.

With regard to the Commission, the document says:

"it must hold Executive power in the European Union and as such must manage the Union's affairs on the basis of the European Union's Laws"—

and so on. There is no question about the Commission. Its powers are there. It is to be the executive and the authority.

With regard to the European Parliament itself, the document says:

"it must collaborate with the Council on the basis of equal rights and powers in all spheres in which the European Union has legislative competence and with respect to all decisions concerning revenue and expenditure."

Further, and most significantly, it must have

"considerably enhanced control over Foreign and Security policy . . . it should be given the right of assent with respect to all fundamental common foreign and security policy

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decisions, in conclusion of international treaties and all decisions adopted unanimously by the Council in the framework of the European union."

My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) reminded me that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs recently took evidence from five members of the European Parliament representing the institutions committee of the European Parliament. It became clear from our exchanges that they were envisaging a federal constitution for the European union, modelled closely on the federal German state with the nation state occupying the role of the German Länder, with the European Parliament fulfilling the role of the Bundestag and representatives of the nation state serving in an upper chamber similar to the Bundesrat. That is the very shape and outline not merely of a constitution but of a familiar federal structure. That is quite interesting. As I say, that was the MEPs' strongly supported view.

We had some exchanges earlier—I shall not go far into the subject—on subsidiarity and people misunderstanding what is meant by federalism. There is no misunderstanding of what is meant here. It is similar to the German or American systems which we know all about. There is a national assembly, in the case of the Americans, and there is the Bundestag in the case of Germany. Those are the sovereign parliamentary bodies. In both cases, in the Senate and the Bundesrat, there are representatives of the 51 or so states and the different Länder. It is a familiar picture.

Mr. Dykes: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that that comparison falls short of the essential components? He has mentioned the Bundestag, the Bundesrat and the Länder, but there is no Bundesregierung—no central government entity. The sovereign member states represented in the right hon. Gentleman's equivalent of the Bundesrat or the upper house, a legislative and policy-forming body, are the sovereign member Governments working freely and voluntarily together in agreed treaty structures, but they remain essentially sovereign member Governments.

Mr. Shore: The only thing missing from the picture is the government. That is the thing that we have not located. We have the two houses. We have the federal distribution of power, and there is no misunderstanding about what federalism is—the transfer of major strategic powers to the new level of government and central institutions such as banks. The missing link is the government. It is clear that the European Parliament and its members who are considering the matter are still uncertain whether the Commission will remain the executive of the new state and whether the President of the Commission is to be drawn, like the German Federal Chancellor, from the European Parliament—that is certainly one road which some members of the institutions committee strongly advocate —or whether he should be elected directly like an American president. The missing component in the federal structure is the government itself and the authority that the presidency derives either from direct election or from the merging, being one of the members of the majority party in the European Parliament.

That is how the majority of MEPs see the future. They have at least one coercive weapon, the use of which is actively being discussed now: they have the right of approval or veto on new member states seeking to join the EC. The European Parliament is saying that enlargement, which it knows certain countries, including the United Kingdom, are keen on, even of the EFTA applicant countries, will not be allowed unless the federal constitution of the union that it is drawing up, or something close to it, is adopted.

Mr. Marlow: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Shore: No, not for the moment.

All that is made clear in the report of the Institutional Affairs Committee, to which I previously referred, in which it called for

"an inter-governmental conference to be convened before 1996 and before any decisions are taken on enlargement and to be given a brief to start this process with the involvement of the European Parliament, on the basis of the draft Constitution of the Union in such a way as to ensure that the Union can absorb other European States while strengthening its cohesion, its ability to take decisions and its democratic legitimacy."

8 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that in his pursuit of ghosts and phantoms he is reading the equivalent of an early-day motion?

Mr. Shore: I am not pursuing ghosts or phantoms. I have a little more respect for the European Parliament than the right hon. Gentleman. I occasionally listen to what it says and read the resolutions that it passes. I reject many out of hand, but this report was prepared by the Institutional Affairs Committee and approved recently by a majority in the European Parliament. In addition, we know that the treaty allows for a new intergovernmental conference by 1996. Under article 189b it has already taken on board the fact that the arrangements agreed at that conference will not be sufficient and will have to be developed further. The Minister cannot say that these are ghosts. That will not do. It is time that he spent a little more time thinking about what is going on in Europe instead of telling us a lot of rubbish about how he saved the day for Britain with his clauses on subsidiarity and his two pillars to the treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Mr. Shore: I shall not give way to the right hon. Gentleman again.

Mr. Marlow: Does not the European Parliament have one overriding objective—to acquire more power? Whatever powers it has it will use to acquire more power, and if we give it more power under the treaty it will be in a stronger position to gain even more power.

Mr. Shore: It works slightly differently. We are persuaded to agree to an increase in the competence of the Community by which we lose control over our policies, especially those decided by qualified majority voting. We then say that our Ministers are no longer responsible to our Parliament, at which point the European Parliament says: "There is a democratic deficit, which we should be looking after." That is part of the process of transferring power and the ambitions of the European Parliament. I do not blame it for having such ambitions, which are understandable. Indeed, it would be soul-destroying to be

a member of the European Parliament unless one wished to see the emergence of a federal state in western Europe controlled largely by the European Parliament.

Mr. Hoon: I am a little concerned that, in describing the Institutional Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, my right hon. Friend is unintentionally misleading hon. Members. For many years, the Institutional Affairs Committee has proposed a series of blueprints—the Spinelli report, which has been mentioned already, was an example—but what resulted in practice was far short of the blueprint that my right hon. Friend describes. Perhaps, to some extent, he needs to put in context what has happened.

Mr. Shore: My hon. Friend makes a fair point, but he must see the Maastricht process in the context of the profound historical developments which have made the thrust to federalism the dominant factor in the Community. The two Germanys have joined together, and the united Germany wishes to enmesh itself in the rest of western Europe. The French, out of fear of a united Germany, are all too anxious to place cords and restraints on Germany, and therefore are prepared to abandon their "Europe des patries" position and advocate federalism in a way which seemed inconceivable three years ago. Against that background, we must judge the movements and initiatives of the European Parliament.

The European Parliament plans to prevent enlargement of the Community by refusing to sanction a further treaty which admits new members. The Institutional Affairs Committee specifically says that it

"disagrees with the view expressed in the conclusions of the Lisbon European Councils of 27 June 1992 that enlargement of the Union to include those EFTA states wishing to accede should be completed without further institutional reforms."

The European Parliament has rejected that. The Lisbon conference recommendation or assertion that it would proceed with enlargement before institutional reform is now explicitly rejected by the Institutional Affairs Committee.

Mr. Barnes: If Maastricht extends qualified majority voting, and thereby the authority of the Council of Ministers, is the federalist dream of some MEPs really on the cards? This is very important to someone such as me who is opposed to Maastricht but who supports a federal Europe. I might be backing the wrong side. Perhaps I should support Maastricht to realise that federalist dream.

Mr. Shore: I do not know how best to advise my hon. Friend. I think that he has more reason to be pleased with the Maastricht treaty than I have. The thrust towards a federal union certainly is in the Maastricht treaty.

I have asked myself the question, as others must: why not have a federal western Europe? If matters currently in the control of our Parliament are being transferred to European institutions, why not give additional power to the European Parliament? I am aware that it has many institutional problems, but does it have the same capacity to develop, change and exercise control and democratic accountability as hon. Members? I rather think not, but —this is the important point—hon. Members are prepared to abide by majority decisions because we all represent the same political community. The community of the United Kingdom gives legitimacy and authority to the laws that are made and passed in Parliament. We accept that that is part of the implicit contract. We are British citizens, and we accept the legitimacy of the laws that are democratically made under due process in our Parliament.

The lie at the heart of the European community is that it is a political community of the same kind when it is not: we are close, we are allies, we are friends, but we are not part of the same citizenship and involvement that we have and believe in. Because that is the lie at the heart of the Community, Britain should never give up to a majority in the European Parliament the powers that we now exercise in our own Parliament.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has made some important points. He has argued that there is a major tendency towards a federal Europe. That tendency is undoubtedly present in Europe. There should be no doubt or difference between us about that thrust, especially in the European Parliament.

However, I ask the right hon. Gentleman to reflect on the fact that the Maastricht treaty undoubtedly cuts back some of the excessive majority powers given under the Single European Act. That fact is illustrated in many of the clusters of amendments that we have considered and in the clauses themselves.

The treaty establishes two separate arms of the union —that on foreign affairs and defence policy and that on home affairs, justice and immigration matters. Those arms are not subject to the Commission. They are separate and they are the instruments of national parliaments and the Councils of Ministers. What is so remarkable about the Maastricht treaty is that, in spite of the federal tendencies, whose existence cannot be doubted, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his colleagues fought back. The Government have begun to push the European Community in the opposite direction, a direction of which I think the right hon. Gentleman would approve. They have enabled parliaments to reassert and reinforce their power over the Community and the Council of Ministers and, indeed, to join together in understanding the European union.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend made a fairly bold statement. He said that the Maastricht treaty cut back on the existing powers of European institutions. Perhaps he could give some examples. He then said that the great success of the pillars was that the Commission was not involved in foreign and defence policies or in home affairs policies. However, if he reads the treaty again, he will see that the Commission has the rights of proposal in all areas of policy and that it should be fully associated with all areas of policy. It is stated that the European Parliament shall be fully associated with the pillars, not only with the existing treaty. I get down on my knees and beg my hon. Friend to read the treaty again, because I am sure that he has not fully understood its implications.

Mr. Wells: I shall not be tempted down that path, because it would distract me from the speech that I wish to make. However, I shall respond to my hon. Friend's comments about the pillars. The pillars are established separately from the treaty of Rome. They are separate from agricultural matters and other sectors in the treaty. The Commission does not have the sole right to institute legislation or make proposals. I acknowledge that there is a separate secretariat to it in the Council of Ministers, so

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the Commission does not provide the civil service for those pillars, but my hon. Friend must accept that the pillars are established separately.

The point at which I am driving is that, contrary to what the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney says, the establishment of the pillars shows a move away from the federal Europe that he so fears.

Mr. Dykes: I did not want to interrupt my hon. Friend when he was rightly admonishing the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) for making such a negative and old-fashioned speech. However, my hon. Friend said that the Maastricht treaty would rein in the majority voting syndrome in the Single European Act. Is that correct? The majority voting proposals in the Single European Act applied only to the first segment of the legislative component, the single market. In that context, during the negotiations between Governments, the British Government were arguing enthusiastically for the acceptance of majority voting. Indeed, they were persuading other Governments to accept it. In that sense, Maastricht builds on the majority voting in other aspects, rather than reducing it from that one component in the Single European Act.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Before my hon. Friend rises——

Mr. Wells: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. May I ask for your ruling? Do I not have to answer the intervention at a time?

The First Deputy Chairman: That is correct.

Mr. Wells: My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is right to say that majority voting was introduced to get the single market established, and it succeeded. He and I are both members of the Select Committee on European Legislation, so we know that majority voting has been extended by various means to cover matters that we had not anticipated. It is apparent from the treaty of Maastricht that the Prime Minister and the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), have reined it in and redefined it in several places. I have not rehearsed the exact instances and I shall not consider them in detail now, but the Minister of State has outlined them for the Committee many times during our debates on several clusters of amendments.

I want to deal with political parties.

Sir Trevor Skeet: With reference to foreign policy, article J.5(3) states:

"The Commission shall be fully associated in these tasks."

With reference to justice and human affairs, article K.4(2) states:

"The Commission shall be fully associated with the work of the areas referred to in this Title."

It seems that the Commission has not been squeezed out because it has exhaustive powers.

8.15 pm

Mr. Wells: The Commission is in a very different position vis-a-vis the two pillars of foreign affairs and security and home affairs and justice. The pillars, as we have called them, are closely associated, but they do not have the sole power of initiation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend has just said that the Commission is fully associated with the European political co-operation established in the Single European Act. It is useful to member states, but, as has been said, the Commission does not enjoy the sole right of initiative in intergovernmental activities, which it does enjoy in areas of its own exclusive competence.

Mr. Wells: My main point relates to the inter-development of Community institutions through political parties——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Wells: I shall give way for the last time.

Mr. Marlow: On reflection, does my hon. Friend not agree that in the areas where the Commission or the institutions have competence, they still have as much competence as they had before? In some areas of existing policy there is more majority voting, so the European institutions have greater competence than before, and in the so-called pillars—areas in which the European institutions had no competence in the past—those institutions now have some degree of competence. Therefore, Community institutions have increased their competence in every area.

Mr. Wells: The association with such matters—especially foreign affairs—merely reflects what the Commission has been doing for some time. The Commission was present at European Council meetings. It had something to say and its opinion was requested. Indeed, the President of the Commission was often invited to submit papers on those issues to the Council.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is correct to say that the Commission is fully associated with European political co-operation. As the Committee will be aware, it is not infrequent in European political co-operation—it will no doubt be frequent in the common foreign and security policy—for decisions to be taken, for example, on association agreements which have a trading element, where there is Commission competence.

Many hon. Members take a great interest in the issue of interior justice. Community states already meet under something loosely called the Trevi process, which the Commission attends. One of the reasons we believe that it is a step forward in European co-operation on matters of interior justice to put it into the union treaty and make it an intergovernmental activity is that it now defines the Commission's role. If my hon. Friend considers these matters carefully he may be a little disturbed at the way in which the Trevi process has been developing and may be relieved, as I am, that we now have it within the union treaty and properly defined as an intergovernmental activity.

Mr. Wells: I shall now move on and begin what I would like to say on the issue that arises on the group of amendments and the development of Europe-wide parties. I want to draw the Committee's attention to the declarations at the back of the Maastricht treaty. They may be at the back, but, as we who have sat on the Foreign Affairs Committee and considered the Single European Act have long recognised, they are important, because the preambles and the declarations set out objectives and inform the Court of Justice how to interpret the treaty.

I want to draw the attention of the Committee, and especially that of those who are worried about the federal tendency of the Community, to the declarations dealing with the conference of parliaments. The Foreign Office's booklet, "Europe after Maastricht", points out on page 18, paragraph 128:

"Thirty-three declarations are appended to the Treaty on European Union. These are not part of the Treaty but constitute a political commitment and form part of the context of the Treaty for the purposes of its interpretation including the European Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance as agreements between member states on the interpretation of the Treaty article concerned. These include" the declaration on the conference of parliaments. I remind the House that the declaration on the conference of parliaments

"invites the European Parliament and national parliaments to meet as necessary as a Conference of the Parliaments"

or assize.

"The Conference will be consulted on the main features of the European Union, without prejudice to the powers of the European Parliament or the rights of national parliaments." The President of the European Council and the President of the Commission will report to each session of the conference of parliaments on the state of the union. The immediately preceding declaration on the role of national parliaments in the European union invites the parliaments to become more involved with the activities of the European union. It says that, to that end, the exchange of information between national parliaments and the European Parliament should be stepped up—and the document continues in that vein.

As Europe evolves, we should control it, direct it and play our part in it. I suggest that we did that for the first time in the negotiation of the Maastricht treaty, in which we played a central role. Thus, we got much of what we wanted to see into the treaty, including a move away from the federal tendency of many of the other parts of Europe. We did that by negotiating right there at the centre.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Wells: That brings up many important issues, which I shall examine when I have given way to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman puts his case well, but he cannot get away from the fundamental dilemma. The whole Maastricht treaty, the resolutions passed recently by the European Parliament—my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) mentioned them—the Spinelli report and other previous resolutions all embody a tendency towards a federal Europe. There is no doubt about that. The Prime Minister negotiated in Maastricht on the basis of gatecrashing a party by going in backwards to give the impression that he was coming out—as my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) once described it. The Prime Minister did that because he had to satisfy certain elements in his party. Now he has the dilemma of having to argue that the proposals are non-federal, although in fact they are federal. That is the dilemma which faces the Conservative party. At least my hon. Friends' position is honest. They have always been honest about their attitude to the European Community, which is more than the Government are at the moment.

Mr. Wells: The hon. Gentleman is making excuses. There are differences on his side of the Committee, too.

Mr. Rogers: We did not negotiate Maastricht.

Mr. Wells: The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney has always been a consistent opponent of the European Community. He has consistently argued against it, and still does, not dispassionately but passionately. We must respect him for his views, and I know that he will respect the views of others both on his side of the Committee, and on ours who have the opposite opinion.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Is my hon. Friend not amused by the inference to be drawn from what the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said—that the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney represents the views of the Labour party? He does not.

Mr. Rogers: I never said that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It might have been inferred from what the hon. Gentleman said. So far as I am aware—the hon. Gentleman will correct me if I am wrong—the Labour party's view on the broad issue is that their Front-Bench spokesmen, like the Government, are against what we in Britain would call a federal Europe.

Mr. Wells: Many of us—including Labour Front-Bench spokesmen, the Government, and the vast majority of hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and even, I believe, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow)—have in common the desire to stay in Europe. That has been said on several occasions. If that is the case, we must develop Europe in a way that we believe is democratic and accountable, and which reflects the ideas and views of our constituents, and enables them to inform the decisions taken in Europe. We must build on the idea of the European Parliament and the national parliaments meeting together.

I suggest that that should not happen in the same way as when we first met in Rome. That brings me back to the question of Europe-wide parties. At the assize in Rome the representatives of national parliaments were broken up. The European Parliament took over the running of things, putting a motion to the assize, which was passed, that made us all sit in so-called Europe-wide parties, thus completely undermining the power of national parties.

Mr. Dykes: I was also a member of that historic assize of the national parliaments and the European Parliament, and I am sure that my hon. Friend would not want to mislead the House. Contrary to the false assertions, the assize was well organised by the Italian authorities, and I remember that a solid majority of the members of the British delegation voted for the resolution whereby everybody sat in party groups.

Mr. Wells: Yes, that is——

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. In Yorkshire do they talk about assize or assizes?

Mr. Wells: They talk about assize in Rome, and that is where we were. My hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East was a member of that assize and he is right to say that a majority of the British delegation voted for the resolution, led by the Labour party but opposed by several people, including myself and, I believe, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford. Yes, we were a minority, but we believed that national parliaments should stick together, because that is what they were there for—to represent their

[Mr. Wells]

parliaments and the national ideas, thoughts, culture and traditions of their countries. In my view, it was wrong to break us up in that fashion.

It is important that we should begin to develop the way in which national parliaments work together. We should first look after the majority voting system enshrined in the Single European Act and in the Maastricht treaty, because under majority voting it is possible for decisions to be made which Britain—including, possibly, both parties representing Britain—totally opposes. Yet those decisions would be imposed upon us by a majority vote. In those circumstances it seems necessary——

Sir Russell Johnston *rose*——

Mr. Wells: I shall give way in a moment, but I shall make my point first.

It is necessary for the national parliaments to meet together to find out what the others are thinking, and why they think in that way. They can then inform the Council of Ministers—their Ministers—and insist that their Ministers vote to reflect the way in which the parliaments and people are thinking. We should then have a direct link into the considerations in the Council of Ministers, under the new pillars and, I venture to suggest, in the European Council.

Sir Russell Johnston: I, too, was at the assize in Rome, and I profoundly and basically disagree with everything that the hon. Gentleman has just said. I should point out modestly that the United Kingdom was represented not by two parties but by three. In this country there is a pluralism which is matched abroad and which the hon. Gentleman should recognise. It was easy—certainly for me—to sit with other people of similar political persuasion, even if they were of different nationalities.

8.30 pm

Mr. Wells: I quite understand the hon. Gentleman's ease of assocation with others in the European Communities who feel and think as he does. There are many more such people in Europe than there are in Britain. The hon. Gentleman felt so comfortable because he is a federalist. My argument is that we can move away from what I regard as thoroughly destructive federal practices—destructive of national parliaments, destructive of national pride and destructive of cultures. We must let the European Communities breathe. Each country must be able to develop and to take a pride in its own history. Some federalist melange is opposed by me and most of my colleagues, including members of the Government.

We must develop the idea that national parliaments should meet together, say, twice a year separately from the European Parliament and then, for a third time, with the European Parliament to exchange ideas. It is essential that we begin to develop this sort of institutional practice if we are truly to have a Europe with some control over the executive bodies—the Commission and now, crucially, the Council. The Maastricht treaty does not say how the Council is to be made accountable. In our case, the Head of Government reports to the House of Commons and is subject to questioning. But that is not universal practice in Europe. Policy decisions that have not been debated by national parliaments or between national parliamentarians are not understood by the peoples of the various countries. Those concerned race ahead with ideas that are simply not understood by the people of Britain.

However, that does not apply only to the people of Britain. To realise that, one has only to look at the result of the referendum in France, where roughly 50 per cent. of people said that they did not want the Maastricht treaty. Why do they not want it? Because they have not been consulted about it, and they are not familiar with the issues involved. It is therefore essential that we develop Europe-wide parties so that there may be political discussions. National parliaments must meet together regularly. The lessons that the privileged members of the Select Committee on European Legislation have learnt must be extended.

In that way we should begin to make up for the undoubted democratic deficit in the Community. We should be able to bring Europe together and achieve deeper understanding. We should achieve more democracy and accountability. By achieving acceptability, we should enshrine the principle of consent to which the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred. The right hon. Gentleman said that the British community is to some extent homogeneous. People in this country lean towards different parties, but they remain one people. We discuss things and then accept majority decisions. That is not a universal practice. It takes place only if the consent of the people to be governed has been obtained through discussion in pubs, lounges and sitting-rooms and through debate in the press. That is what we must reproduce in Europe.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Wells: No. I am just completing my remarks. We must get on and proceed to a vote so that this treaty may be ratified.

We must look forward to a situation in which we can build on the Maastricht treaty, which marks the beginning of the path away from federalism and towards a Europe of nations co-operating for their common benefit, not trying to rule or suppress each other.

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I hope that you, Mr. Morris, and the Committee will bear with me, as I am losing my voice following a visit to Brussels. I might criticise a number of things about that visit, but I cannot claim that it is responsible for my loss of voice. I understand that several other hon. Members are similarly afflicted.

I am particularly keen to speak about this aspect of the treaty. To me, one of the most amazing things to emerge from the visit to Brussels and its institutions was the openness and clarity with which people there see the treaty and understand what they are entering into.

I was struck by a couple of comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who talked about decisions that we would still be able to make after signing the Maastricht treaty. He said that we would be able to choose what powers to transfer to a European level. He said that we ought to have the right to decide what degree of sovereignty to cede, and that we should cede only where necessary and desirable. But that is not how the European Commission and the European Parliament see the situation. The question of ceding will be

determined the other way round. Issues of subsidiarity will come from the centre—from Brussels and the European Parliament.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly entitled to tell us what are the opinions of European parliamentarians and of Commission officials,. and no doubt he intends to do so. I am sure that he will wish to remind the Committee that neither the European Parliament nor the Commission is a signatory to the Maastricht treaty. Signing the treaty is a matter for member states. The two institutions that the hon. Gentleman is about to quote extensively are perfectly entitled to their opinions, but decisions are taken by member states and by the Council of Ministers. I think that I see the way in which the hon. Gentleman's speech is developing, which is why I am reminding the Committee of the situation.

Mr. Simpson: The decision will be made by the House of Commons as a potential signatory to the treaty, but it may well be the last useful decision that the House is invited to make, as unmaking it will be impossible. I accept what the right hon. Gentleman has said, but I want hon. Members to understand the importance of our role in making that decision.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend is being a little naive if he thinks that institutions of the Community—the Commission and the Court of Justice—will not have power to use this treaty, or that they do not have their own agenda. If my right hon. Friend is not persuaded by that fact, will the hon. Gentleman remind him that Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand both have an interpretation of the treaty totally different from that of Her Majesty's Government? They believe that it is a federal treaty, for a federal Europe.

Mr. Simpson: These are points that I hope to develop. They accord with my interpretation of what we are entering into, and of the agenda on which other people are already working, on a European scale.

The two-day, all-party delegation in Brussels met a number of people, ranging from the Director General of the Commission to the Commission's legal and economic advisers, and to senior Commissioners. Let me mention some things that were put to us candidly and openly.

The presumption in Europe is that economic sovereignty will already have been ceded to the European central bank. There is no question of national Governments' retaining powers and responsibilities other than those dictated by the European central bank.

One of the most telling points that came out of our session with the economic advisers was that they conceded that the only lever on the economy that would remain in the hands of national Governments would be the choice of using either mass unemployment or taxation as regulators of the economy. All other levers would have been taken centrally into the unaccountable and unelected European central bank. Anyone who does not understand that point occupies a different world from the one that I occupy, and is taking part in a different debate.

The question of subsidiarity also arose. It is an interesting notion, on which many hon. Members have spent a considerable time.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The amendments that we are debating deal with the institutions—the Council, the Commission and the Parliament. The hon. Gentleman cannot run through the other matters, such as subsidiarity, that he may have discussed in Brussels. Please will he return to the subject of the institutions?

Mr. Simpson: I was trying to make a point about the European Court of Justice and about whether the question of subsidiarity was justiciable. The assumption by the advisers was that the court would be unlikely to make a judgment which was in conflict with the consensus among the rest of the European states.

There were mixed messages for the House on the Commission's ability to apply the social chapter. The first message was that the Commission said clearly that it heard the debate going on in the House, but did not believe that the Commission's ability to apply the social chapter depended on whether Britain accepted it. The Commission's officers believed that it had, in article 118, all the powers necessary to develop a unified European social policy.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have followed up the hon. Gentleman's discussions with that Commission official, and I suspect that there may have been a misunderstanding. I know that the hon. Gentleman would not wish to misinterpret what that official said. The official was saying that the Community, through the Single European Act, already has a social dimension. The United Kingdom supports that social dimension and has a better record of implementing the directives that flow from it than any other country in the Community has.

The official may have been misunderstood in this sense. He was saying not that other actions that the other 11 may wish to take outside the social dimension could not take place, but that the United Kingdom would not be affected by them. I know that the hon. Gentleman would not want to misinterpret the senior official with whom he spoke.

Mr. Simpson: It is only fair to say that, if there was a misunderstanding or a misinterpretation, the senior official was pretty consistent about ensuring that we misinterpeted the point. He was pressed on the point several times, and he repeated his comments—much to the consternation of a number of Conservative Members who were part of the delegation. I simply make that point.

My next point is a cautionary one for Opposition Members who are enthusiasts for the treaty. The official's qualification was that, if the financial resources were not there, within the remit defined by the central bank, it did not matter what social policy framework there was, because money would not be produced out of thin air by Governments who had no legal right to direct the bank to release the necessary resources. I suspect that there is not much comfort for any hon. Member in that point.

The officials then took us through the role of the Commission in terms of the regulatory framework. This is precisely the point that was made earlier. The Commission clearly has its own agenda for a rolling regulatory framework. It was described in positive terms in many ways, and I could understand that. We were told that the Commission had a bureaucracy that was very different from the bureaucracy that we encounter in the House of Commons. It is: it is more open and more accessible. The whole delegation was able to get answers far more forthright than those that we get in the House.

[Mr. Simpson]

The officials also said that they employed bright people to come up with bright ideas, and that those bright people then drafted bright regulations to implement them. We were told that those people's zeal sometimes made them act in ways about which more senior officials might not feel entirely happy.

They cited the example of a set of proposals for European regulations on zoos. The zeal was such that the proposals had come to the point of requiring the owners of zoos to specify which routes out of the zoo they thought the animals would take in the event of a break-out. The proposal was described in the Commission as being about whether the animals would shop at Sainsbury or Tesco.

The real question is not whether the Commission should stop employing bright and zealous people, but the extent to which they are held accountable to a democratic process.

Mr. Hoon: Is not the logic of my hon. Friend's argument that we should give real power to the European Parliament, and that we should make the European Commission subject to the European Parliament?

8.45 pm

Mr. Simpson: That is one line of argument. My difficulty—I have a number of close friends in the European Parliament—is that I regard that Parliament, as it is structured, as a Mickey Mouse institution. I need to be convinced that the European Parliament could function democratically so that it could hold the Commission to account and be accountable to its domestic electorates. I raise that point as a legitimate reservation.

Mr. Dykes: I am disturbed by what the hon. Gentleman says, but not because I am worried about his phantasmagorical description of the so-called "excessive" ambitions of the Commission. That is what the Commission is there for. It is for the member Governments to vote on the legislation that the Commission proposes.

In what form is the hon. Gentleman reporting to the Committee on these matters? Does he propose just to leave his own words on the record today? Will there be a report of the meeting? Will the Commission issue its own report? Will the hon. Gentleman place a copy of the official proceedings of the meeting in the Library? If he does not, we are relying solely on his hearsay and rather hyperbolic description of a meeting, with which others might not agree.

Mr. Simpson: I invite the hon. Gentleman to check my comments against the experiences of Conservative Members who were also part of that delegation. I shall be happy to hear the hon. Gentleman's judgment about the accuracy of my comments, based on their comments. He will have to live with my interpretation of how that tour went for the time being.

Mr. Dykes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Simpson: I will not.

The Commission came over clearly as saying that there was a crisis of confidence in the Commission. The crisis of confidence had been caused precisely because institutions such as the House of Commons were not simply rubber-stamping the treaty. The crisis of confidence was not caused by feeling the need fundamentally to review the Commission's role and its lack of political accountability, but by the feeling that it was treading water until the treaty was signed. I again caution the Committee against failure to understand that what we face is not a crisis of confidence, but a pause in the regulatory momentum. That cautionary message should not be lost on the Committee.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Is not the proof of the excellent points that the hon. Gentleman makes so fairly and accurately in the treaty itself? There may be a genuine desire to give powers to the European Parliament, but all that can be given are cosmetic powers. That is abundantly clear, because the structure of the EC is such that there is no way in which real powers could be given to the European Parliament unless we started all over again and had a European Government. Is not the proof of what the hon. Gentleman says simply in the wording of the treaty, of which article 107a is a perfect example? It gives Parliament simply the power to suggest legislation to the Commission.

Mr. Simpson: Nothing that came out of my visit to the Parliament and the Commission surprised me: it is there in the treaty, writ large for those who wish to read and understand it.

We need to understand how far into the agenda of forward thinking in a centralised planning context the rest of Europe and certainly the Commission already are. I picked up one of the documents produced in the European Parliament by the research directorate. I was not charged, it was gratis; it may be the last free thing we get. The document has to do with the prospects for a foreign and security policy for the European union after Maastricht.

The Chairman: Order. I do not know about that, but it is out of order on this amendment.

Mr. Simpson: Can I cite it as a comment on the perspectives of the Parliament, then?

The Chairman: All right.

Mr. Simpson: The preface says:

"The treaty of European union, however imperfect it may be, lays the cornerstone for the development of a European federal state and of a European Constitution."

Below that, it says:

"credit is due to the Heads of State and Government of the Member States . . . for having succeeded in Maastricht in reconciling clearly divergent interests and constitutional traditions in the field of foreign and security policy and hammering out a compromise package which opens up new prospects for a common foreign and security policy."

So the presumptions of the Parliament are very clear that there is a role that will fall into its lap and into the lap either of the Commission, or of the Council of Ministers, which will carry this through.

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Gentleman is seriously misleading the Committee. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman is accidentally and forgiveably misleading the Committee by mistake.

Will he not agree that he has just cited an obscure document giving the opinions of some of the members of the research department of the European Parliament? It is not even a policy document, and it may never make any progress. The European Parliament is full of documents like that. Indeed, we have documents in the House which are not policy documents or governmental decisions. That

will not be the sacred text of the future. What about the plurality of ideas and different views on the development of Europe that come from all sources in the Community, including Britain?

Mr. Simpson: I am not suggesting that this is already the agenda that we shall be writing our name to; I am saying that, if this is not the direction in which we are heading, there has to be written into the treaty a whole series of democratic checks and constraints which are not there at the moment, and which have to address the fact that this is the direction in which contemporary thinking is going. I say this to inform the Committee, rather than to mislead. I do not believe that I am misleading the Committee. If I am doing so inadvertently, I am sure that I am not the first to have done so.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Would the hon. Gentleman care to speculate why it was that, at the last meeting in the negotiations before agreement at Maastricht, the President of the European Parliament told the member states that the Parliament was so unhappy with the shape of the treaty that had emerged that he seriously doubted whether it would be prepared to support it? So when the hon. Gentleman reads out the perfectly legitimate wishes of the European Parliament, he must not imply to the Committee that the member states have met, or will meet, those wishes.

Mr. Simpson: There is a gap between what people's wishes are and what mechanisms the House would have for addressing those policy proposals and changes if that is the direction in which they go. I am simply saying that, before we sign our names to this treaty, we must ask ourselves what checks and controls we would have, so that we could say no to this sort of development once we had signed the Maastricht treaty.

I believe that the presumptions of the Commission and of the European Parliament—and perhaps of the Council of Ministers too, although I have not visited its members—are that we would be moving towards a much more centralised bureaucracy, which will determine the shape of Europe.

The other point that came out of each of the sessions during this visit was in connection with European monetary union. The Commission's assumptions about the role of the bank were all to the effect that European monetary union was a deferred inevitability. The notion of the opt-out was described as the legitimate choice of a passenger choosing to bail out of an aircraft at 10,000 feet without a parachute. Of course we would have that choice, but the question is whether at the time we would believe that only a fool would squander the existing position and take the risk of not taking the next step. That is very similar to the message that we are being given now.

I simply convey to the Committee that these were the messages that were coming back to me as part of that argument.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman asked what checks the House would have if moves take place in the direction that he is concerned about. What will happen is that there will be another intergovernmental conference and another treaty, which will be brought to the House, and the House will be told that, as with the Maastricht treaty, we have to take the whole treaty and nothing but the treaty.

Mr. Simpson: That is a very fair point. It raises for me a huge set of questions about what we are signing up to. Nothing dented my perception that the nature of the beast was that the institutions are unelected, unaccountable and undeterred in their forward planning by the debate taking place in the Committee and in the House. The presumption is that this is a minor distraction which has to be entertained before the real business of centralised planning can take place in a European context.

I am not wholeheartedly opposed to that. If I believed that this was planning for a socialist Europe, I would be in favour of it. But it is not a socialist Europe. In that sense, I differ from my colleagues on the other side of the Committee. I see the terms of this treaty as signing us up to a set of arrangements in which the primary function of the institutions in Europe will be to respond to the interests of European capital. The terms of reference of the European bank make the subservient role of nation states very clear.

It would be a huge millstone around the neck of an incoming Labour Government to attempt to buck the rulings of the central bank about borrowing limits, interest rates and debt ratios. If we were faced with the institutional rules and framework to which we are signing up, how would we adjust the economy to deliver a socialist programme? The question which must be addressed, by those on the Opposition Front Bench as much as by those on the Government Front Bench, relates to how they wish to run the economy. We are signing up to a millstone for a socialist Government, rather than some back entrance to a socialist utopia.

In terms of the enhanced role proposed for the European Parliament, hon. Members who doubt the extent to which powers will be given to the European Parliament are absolutely right. A facade democracy would be constructed. The democracy would have no power. It would struggle itself to be accountable, or to have any significant influence in the key decisions which would be made behind closed doors in European institutions. What would be the role of hon. Members with regard to the institutions and the framework which we are setting up?

9 pm

One of the saddest things I must say to the Committee is that we have sold the pass in terms of our responsibilities to the electorate, and in terms of the institutions of Europe. A couple of years ago, I wrote a book forewarning people about the consequences of signing up to the Single European Act and its implications for industry and race relations in Britain and Europe. One of the most frustrating things is that, when I tried to find out what was going on, in terms of international negotiations in which the United Kingdom was involved at a European or intergovernmental level, I was not able to find out anything.

The House of Commons has ceded large tranches of democratic decision-making powers to Ministers, and Ministers have trotted off to take their decisions behind closed doors in Europe. The House has betrayed its democratic responsibilities and the British people. It is no good bleating that we see European institutions looming even larger and saying, "But we never knew." It was written large in the Single European Act for everyone to see. We did not have to wait for Maastricht to know what sort of writing was on the wall.

I went to Brussels with a specific local agenda. I wanted to know from Sir Leon Brittan what action the Commission would take to halt the dumping of Chinese bicycles in Britain. The issue has been raised on the Floor of the House, and I have tried to raise it with the Department of Trade and Industry. Sir Leon Brittan told me—the answer was clear—that it has been handed to Europe. The decision will be made in Europe. Britain is powerless. The Department of Trade and Industry has, it seems, already opted out—and handed its responsibility over to Europe. All I was able to get from the Commissioner were comments similar to those made by the Prime Minister this afternoon, which was basically: "It wasn't me," and, "I wasn't there."

When I saw Sir Leon Brittan, I hoped that the Commissioner responsible for foreign relations and trade would be able to say, "This is the line that we are taking in Europe on anti-dumping policies." What did we get? We got a "maybe". It was clear that hon. Members from both sides of the House, who were pressing the Commissioner hard on this issue, had no leverage at all. The decision may or may not be made, but it will be whimsical, unaccountable and unchallengeable.

I came away saying to colleagues on both sides of the House what I now say to the Committee: how would a British Parliament defend its industry in such circumstances? How would the House defend jobs in Raleigh in my constituency or the cycle industry in Britain as a whole? If it wanted to halt the dumping of bikes in the United Kingdom but found that the decisions had been handed over to a European level, what would it do? The powers to intervene, economically, in our national self-interest will career away at a rate which we will only ever live to regret.

My hostility to the treaty is that the framework given to political and administrative institutions does not say that the remit is to re-create full employment in Europe. It says that everything will be subject to the interests of price stability. At best, we will see only jobless growth in Europe; a growth focused entirely on money interests. That is what institutions such as the European Parliament, the Commission, the Court of Justice and the European bank will be required to deliver.

It is sad that it has taken until now for the Committee to realise how much we have sold out the interests of British people. We will not be forgiven for surrendering ourselves to such a shabby deal from which the people of Britain and people in Europe will gain nothing.

Mr. Dykes: The hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) made an interesting speech and the Committee listened with great care. I hope that he will not think that I address him in any spirit of condescension when I say that many speeches with a similar context have been made over many years, and many hon. Members on both sides of the Committee would disagree with his conclusions.

I share the hon. Gentleman's pessimism about the awful and depressing era of high unemployment which all member states, including Britain, are experiencing. *[Interruption.]* As I am referring to the hon. Gentleman's speech, perhaps he will listen. Unemployment is a depressing reality and many policy measures must be taken to overcome it. One means or another must be used both by member states and by the institutions of the European Community, but we cannot reach that conclusion for ever and say that unemployment is a result of our membership of the Community and the way in which its institutions work.

The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood the way in which the Community functions. He grossly exaggerated the powers, of the Commission. The Commission's delegated powers, for example, in international trade negotiations have given increased strength to the individual member states and to the collectivity. The examples of that are so numerous that I shall not weary the House by going through them. It is much better for the Commission to represent the whole Community. It has initiated remarkably successful anti-dumping actions against imports which enter member states, including Britain, at an undervalued price. The hon. Gentleman was worried about the single example of dumping of bicycles. That is his local interest and I deeply respect him for raising it.

It is absurd to say that the system under which the European Community works is deficient or that we have surrendered our powers to it, except by the normal process of delegated legislation. We support the majority of decisions reached by the United Nations Security Council or the other mechanisms of the United Nations. Action is taken as a result of those decisions. For example, peacekeeping forces are sent out. We do not say that we have lost powers as a result of that. We signed a treaty which gave us additional strength with our countries. As a result of that action, treaty-based decision making takes place and is reported back to Parliament. That is the process.

You might say that Parliament should have another bite of the cherry and force the Government to change their mind on the treaty. You might say that the institutions of the EC are not working as we expected. But that would be manifestly absurd. When I said "you", Mr. Morris, I was speaking in the general, broad sense. I apologise.

The European enthusiasts in this place regard the Maastricht treaty as an extremely mild document which creates a well-balanced relationship between the institutions of the EC. It is much less profound—the hon. Member for Nottingham, South was right about this—than the Single European Act with its implications for the future. That is probably so, but we did not have the perturbations and hysteria from the "antis" on the Single European Act that we have had on the Maastricht treaty. That in itself leads one to some interesting political conclusions.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It is an interesting contrast.

Mr. Dykes: As my right hon. Friend the Minister of State reminds us, there is an interesting and sharp contrast between the reaction to the Single European Act and these prolonged debates.

The relationship between all the EC institutions as they are established to work in the future will be extremely satisfactory. The Commission will have the enhanced powers which come from those parts of the Maastricht treaty in which integration has been increased. Majority voting decisions of the Council of Ministers will presumably tend to accept principal Commission regulations and directives—mainly directives. Sometimes the United Kingdom will be in a minority. Sometimes it

will be in a majority. Sometimes there will be no vote. The Council of Ministers will think that something is such a good idea that it will allow it to go ahead.

The role and power of all the institutions is enhanced by the treaty. That is perhaps an unusual achievement. There will be a much greater degree of co-operation, but most Community activity will remain intergovernmental. I cannot understand why the anti-Maastricht—I must not say anti-European because I know that it produces a protest—colleagues on this side of the House and on the Opposition Benches are so worried. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made a terribly old-fashioned speech. We have heard all that before.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) is old fashioned.

Mr. Dykes: I do not believe that I am. The first part of my speech may have sounded old fashioned, but I am coming to the new bits. We have all repeated ourselves in these debates over the years but so much of the weight, incidence and proportionality of operating in the Maastricht treaty is so intergovernmental that, as has been said already, enthusiastic and active members of the European Parliament and some senior Commission officials have complained bitterly that they feel let down that the original intention of the solemn declaration on European union in June 1983 has been massively diluted as a result of these prolonged intergovernmental negotiations.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I know that my hon. Friend has very strong views, but if he takes that view, will he please look at page 91 of the treaty as one of 17 examples I could give him? He will see the economic powers of the central bank. Far from being intergovernmental, no government, no Member of Parliament, no person is allowed to make representations. They are in charge, these civil servants appointed for eight years at a time. If my hon. Friend believes that there is some kind of intergovernmental or democratic control, will he read the treaty and accept that in running economic policy, despite the view of the Foreign Office which has a lot of nonsense in its documents, it says specifically that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the French Government, the German Government, none of them is even allowed to make representations to the central bank. How is that intergovernmental?

Mr. Dykes: We can all pick out, in an exaggerated way, the most emotional bits of the treaty and misquote the implication.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Have you read it?

Mr. Dykes: Yes, I have; unlike some Members, I have read everything in the treaty. I do not agree with my hon. Friend about that, but I do agree with what he was saying earlier—that the increase in the powers and functions of the European Parliament was very slight and that that was also the mirror image of the reality that no European Government has proposed. I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said that. It is true. All hon. Members must fairly and objectively agree that not one entity in the Community, not one power source, nor any politician of any seniority or moment in any member state has suggested the creation of a single physical intergovernmental entity located in Brussels or any other important city of the Community.

Before anyone tries to intervene and say that Herr Bangemann said that, I think I am right in saying that —I had been hoping to get the text, but it has not arrived; if I find later that I am incorrect, I will apologise, of course —Herr Bangemann did not use the British translation when he used phrases about a federal state but referred once again to "the federation". The misunderstanding there was again deliberate and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney was correct when he did not accede to that and did not join in that classic, continuous conspiracy of misunderstanding but said that the federal German model had one gap in this particular structure, which was the federal government based in Bonn and perhaps in Berlin in the future. That does not exist in this structure as proposed nor in the Community structure which has already existed for many years. If anybody here can produce the name of a senior important member of any Government or of the European Parliament, apart from an expression of opinion, who has suggested the creation of a single governmental entity structure based presumably in Brussels, then I will happily correct myself.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course we can all trade quotations backwards and forwards with each other, but since Herr Bangemann has been mentioned it might be helpful to the Committee to recall the speech made by Chancellor Kohl, who is, after all, the federal Chancellor, who said in Oxford on 11 November:

> "We have not laid the foundation stone with Maastricht for a European superstate which will reduce everything to the same level and blur the differences. Rather we have committed ourselves to a Europe constructed on the principle of unity and diversity".

Mr. Dykes: I agree with my right hon. Friend about that important utterance. That is the great attraction, charm and beauty—if I am not getting too carried away —of the whole process. It is a unique new creation. The treaty reinforces the intergovernmental and national aspects. I agreed with my right hon. Friend— *Interruption.]* It is difficult trying to continue against this Caledonian barrage from Scotland, Mr. Morris. I apologise for using the term Caledonian in a totally wrong way, but I was referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) referred to the need to involve national parliaments more. That is an important point on which to build, in the sense not of national parliaments representing national interests, but of party groups meeting the European Parliament more often. The process remains pluralistic and diverse with a multiplicity of voices from everywhere. The idea that there is a concentration of power anywhere is manifestly and patently absurd.

9.15 pm

Mr. Winnick: The hon. Gentleman referred to Martin Bangemann, the vice-president of the European Commission, who has made perfectly clear exactly what he wants. Whatever the semantics may be about federalism, he has not been repudiated by any of his colleagues, including Chancellor Kohl. When the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr.

[Mr. Winnick]

Spearing) whether a single currency meant a single Government—and no one, not even the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) could be more enthusiastic about Maastricht than the right hon. Gentleman the Father of the House—he said that it did and he was quite happy about it. That is what he wants and presumably what the hon. Member for Harrow, East wants.

Mr. Dykes: The right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) was expressing an opinion. I did not notice that he was a signatory to the treaty. Who signed the treaty? Sovereign member states, increasing their intrinsic sovereignty as a result. As a keen exponent of the development of the Community, I am delighted to see that the integration between those sovereign states has also been enhanced.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I am saddened by the thrust of my hon. Friend's speech. I have always felt that my hon. Friend was one of the more honest hon. Members. He believes in federalism and has always defended it, but he now seems to be backing off and joining Ministers by saying that the great thing about the treaty is that it does not embrace federalism. My hon. Friend should not be seduced by what was said by Chancellor Kohl because on 3 April 1992 at Bertelsmann, Chancellor Kohl said quite specifically:

> "In Maastricht we laid the foundation stone for the completion of the European union; the united states of Europe."

Which speech are we to take? I hope that my hon. Friend will stick to his guns and defend his genuinely federalist position so that we know where we stand.

Mr. Dykes: Armed with that exhortation, how could I refuse to accept my hon. Friend's suggestion? I did not say that I approved or disapproved of it because it was not a federal issue. Of course it is a federal Europe. Lest my hon. Friend gets excited about it, it is not in the sense that he expects. He thinks mistakenly that federalism means a single Government structure emerging from Brussels, but he is wrong. The united states of Europe means what it says—without capital letters, necessarily—a federation in the European Community sense of sovereign member countries. Perhaps more use will be made of majority voting. Each member state will take part in decision making and sometimes will be part of the majority and sometimes part of the minority.

Perhaps it was because the hon. Member for Nottingham, South is an inexperienced Member—I do not say that with any condescension—but it is risky, to say the least, to report what was presumably a private meeting on the basis of his interpretation of what was said by quite justifiably enthusiastic Commission officials. It is their job, and they would be attacked and condemned if they were not constantly making proposals that the treaty arrangement required of them, but it does not mean that those proposals are taken up.

The Commission complains constantly that the Council of Ministers, and member Governments, individually or collectively, are turning down ideas when they may have made the original suggestion and asked the Commission to look into something and then they turn it down, as the European Council does.

I would love to know some more details, such as the names of that fascinating delegation. I assume that it was made up of eight plus eight members. Perhaps the Liberal Democrats were not involved and it was eight plus eight because, given the small Government majority, everyone is so fanatical about pairing. Whatever the number, I think that I am right in saying that all the Conservative Members who went were extremely sceptical about the Maastricht treaty. On their first visit, I expect that they went into those meetings with European Community officials ready to pounce on the slightest sign of collective enthusiasm for developing the European Community under the Maastricht treaty.

No, I am sure that, to the contentment of everyone in this sovereign Parliament, those arrangements remain very much the decisions and objectives of member Governments, and that that will remain the case. It has been a slow process, but I am glad that at long last the member Governments are slowly and hesitantly getting together in the agreed integrated structures, which has been the intention ever since the treaty of Rome was signed and since the solemn declaration on European union in June 1983.

Mr. Simpson: I am more than happy to give the hon. Gentleman a detailed breakdown of members of the delegation and of the senior officials and Commissioners we met. I am only too happy for him and other hon. Members to check out their comments to us. To be fair to Conservative Members, I think that their scepticism grew with the honesty and clarity of the answers. Perhaps that is one of the features that has been missing from some of the information given to the Committee.

Mr. Dykes: That makes the position a little better. It is easy for us to reproduce conversations or so-called conversations when we come back here, but sometimes the human ear does not hear correctly. I would be much happier, however, if the hon. Gentleman would arrange for the Commission's report and minutes of the meeting to be deposited in the Library. Presumably someone took notes. That would be the only way to satisfy us that the record is correct and available for all to see.

In conclusion——

Mr. Jenkin *rose*——

Mr. Dykes: I shall not give way again as it would not be fair to other hon. Members.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney is unfortunately no longer in the Chamber. If he had allowed more interventions from Members who he thought would be unhelpful, he would have found that in many cases they would have supported the spirit of his new clause 21. Happily, for various reasons, it has no chance of making progress, but I agree with some of the spirit behind the new clause. The mistake was that it should have been constructed differently. As the Minister of State said in his intervention, one could not insert such a procedural complexity into our statute or reproduce it in the treaty —it would be impossible.

Returning to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford, I hope that the Scrutiny Committee will not only scrutinise existing directives, regulations, decisions, reports and communications emanating from the European Commission, but will also be able to do the same with official declarations and

decisions taken by the Council of Ministers and decisions taken by the European Commission on behalf of the other institutions. It is important to achieve that, but the Committee would have to be larger and would probably involve sub-committees, which is a nightmarish scenario.

It is important to reassure the public in all member states that their Parliaments are involved through the natural human liaison of the party groups, right across the spectrum, in the European Parliament and elsewhere. That Parliament should be armed with even more powers to ensure that the man and woman in the street are directly related to the whole process and do not regard it as a remote phenomenon. They would find that particularly offensive at a time when they are so concerned about unemployment, redundancy, economic and social problems and all the rest, and regard the treaty as a remote and strange exercise in the House of Commons and elsewhere.

Sir Russell Johnston: Institutional questions are fundamental and important, but, sad to say, for many people they are very boring. I do not mean boring in the sense of the boring speech made by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who held us enthralled by the incandescence of his oratory for 87 minutes or thereabouts. Rather, I am referring to the fact that, although the frameworks within which we operate our democracy are exceedingly important, they are strangely difficult to make politically sexy.

Before deploying my argument, which will be exceedingly sexy, I should like to refer briefly to the speech by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who has unfortunately left the Chamber. He is always extremely courteous and thoughtful. I was interested by the way in which he ended his speech, which comprised the philosophy of the anti-marketeer. He said that the lie at the heart of the European Community is the idea that it is the same kind of community as the real community of the United Kingdom.

Interesting, but is it true? It is difficult to argue about it because at the core of the right hon. Gentleman's argument was not an argument but an emotion—a nationalist emotion, actually. I do not say that pejoratively: I say it descriptively. Emotions are notoriously impervious to reason, as we all know—but let me have a little try with the argument.

The hon. Gentleman's first assumption is that the real community of the United Kingdom, the community of Scots, Welsh, Irish and English, is more coherent or homogeneous than the Community of French, Germans, Dutch and so on. Is it? I contend that it is neither more nor less homogeneous in terms of attitude, history, behaviour patterns, likes and dislikes. There are of course language problems——

Sir Trevor Skeet *rose*——

Sir Russell Johnston: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman shortly. There are certain problems, but I contend that there is more homogeneity in Europe, including us, than there is between us and the United States, despite the fact that we speak the same language. We have more in common.

The right hon. Gentleman's second assumption——

Sir Trevor Skeet: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman must not get excited; it is bad for the heart.

The right hon. Gentleman's second assumption was that the real community of the United Kingdom produces some sort of mystical mix that is unique and intrinsically productive of better ways of looking at things—institutions, law, democracy and attitudes—than the mix across the channel. I would say that our mix is certainly more familiar to us, but that does not necessarily make it superior. In Europe we are more alike than we are different, and I am not afraid of that.

The basic problem facing the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney is that he is afraid. I think that he is wrong to be afraid.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that there are at least 32 ethnic groups in Europe, and even more languages? Although there may be a number of nations embodied in the United States of America, they have a single language, English. Is he further aware that Europe has been splitting up recently? The former Yugoslavia has broken down into three or four different states, for instance. How then can he suggest unification in 1993?

Sir Russell Johnston: I am well aware of all those things. I read the newspapers just like everyone else. As I said a moment ago, I simply reach a different conclusion. We must agree to differ.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Would the hon. Gentleman care to recall that in the origins of the United States of America just three votes made the difference between Americans' language being English as opposed to German; and that most forecasters accept that the predominant language of the United States of America by the turn of the century will be Spanish?

9.30 pm

Sir Russell Johnston: I have no doubt that that is of pleasure to the Minister of State, who is sitting on the Government Front Bench looking pleased with himself.

At the time of the various intergovernmental conferences that ran up to Maastricht, there was great hope that the new treaty would do far more than, in the opinion of me and my colleagues, it does. There was great feeling that it would sweep away the democratic deficit, but it has not. It was felt that it would give real legislative power to the European Parliament, but it does not. The changes that it will make are relatively modest.

A great opportunity was missed at Maastricht. The Germans—we often talk about them in the context of Europe—were arguing strongly in favour of giving increased power to a democratically and directly elected European Parliament, and were willing to relinquish full control over their most prized asset, the deutschmark, through bringing about economic and monetary union. It is difficult to know in these recessionary times, with nationalism once again on the rise, when such an offer will again be laid before us.

Far from regarding Germany as a threat, I look upon it as a country which is exemplary in its behaviour. I am frequently astonished by the contradictory attitude of those xenophobes who fear Germany and at the same time argue that an integrated Europe is something to oppose. If Germany is to assert itself, it will do so much more forcefully within a loose arrangement in Europe rather than in the integration that it has wanted. That is what was

[Sir Russell Johnston]

wanted by the politicians of the Kohl generation, but it is something which the next generation of Germans may not want quite so much.

The Maastricht treaty takes one or two steps in the right direction in terms of increasing the power of the European Parliament, but I do not think that it is an enormous step to give what I think the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) described as negative legislative power in the form of being able to reject proposals.

The changes to the Commission are welcome. It will be sensible to extend the term of office to five years to run concurrently with the European Parliament. It is to be welcomed that the European Parliament will have an increased role in the appointment of Commissioners, and especially in the appointment of the President. That enables me to make a brief reference to the amendment tabled by the official Opposition that proposes that the appointment of Commissioners should be subject to the approval of the House of Commons. I do not agree with that. It is a proposal which misses the basic point that Commissioners, once appointed, do not take on national responsibilities. Instead, they pledge themselves to look at the Community through the eyes of a Community citizen rather than as a German, a Brit or whatever. I think that that is right.

Article 146, which allows representatives at ministerial level to be on the Council of Ministers, is welcome. It is certainly welcomed by those of us who have long argued that Ministers from the Scottish and Welsh Offices should be present, as a matter of course, when relevant issues are being discussed by the Council. I suppose that Liberal Democrats favour the "Europe des Regions" concept as a goal, and we see a small and hesitant step in the right direction.

A further change to the power of the Parliament is that the uniform electoral procedure requires Parliament's assent. That is article 138, and it brings me to amendment No. 426, which was tabled by the Liberal Democrat party. The article states:

"The European Parliament shall draw up proposals for elections by direct universal suffrage in accordance with a uniform procedure in all Member States. The Council shall, acting unanimously after obtaining the assent of the European Parliament, which shall act by a majority of its component members, lay down the appropriate provisions, which it shall recommend to Member States for adoption in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements."

Apart from one failed attempt in 1982, the European Parliament has failed to fulfil that obligation. The result has been that the British Liberal Democrats who, in terms of popular support, are the largest Liberal party in the EC, have remained unrepresented in the European Parliament since 1979. In 1984 the SDP-Liberal alliance got 20·1 per cent. of the vote and yet did not win a single MEP.

That has an effect not just on us, but on the Community. For example, at the 1979 election the Conservative group, which then, somewhat euphemistically, called itself the European Democrats and was not at that time involved in the passionate marriage to which the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) referred at some length——

Mr. Rogers: The hon. Gentleman referred to the Conservative party's marriage with the Christian Democrats. In 1979, the Conservative party tried to ally itself with the Christian Democrats, but the Christian Democrats thought that the Tories were far too right wing. The only people who would ally themselves with the Conservative party in the 1979-84 European Parliament were the right-wing Danish neo-fascists. They were the only ones who would keep the Conservative party company.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman is partly correct. To be fair, there were three Danish Conservative MEPs in the Conservative group but they were not exceptionally right wing. The extreme right-wing party of which the hon. Gentleman is thinking is the party of a certain Mr. Glistrop, which was never a member of the Conservative group. It had enough right-wing members from Britain already.

My point is that the group had 63 MEPs. Across Europe, they represented 6·2 per cent. of the vote. The Liberal group got 10·6 per cent. of the vote across Europe, but had only 40 MEPs. That is a gross discrepancy which was directly due to the lack of a proportional system in the United Kingdom. We are the only country in the Community which does not currently use a proportional system for European elections.

There is even an example of proportional representation in the United Kingdom in Northern Ireland which uses the single transferable vote system. That was introduced by a Conservative Government to ensure that the minority did not dominate the majority.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): It may have been a slip of the tongue, but that is not what happened. It allowed the minority to dominate the majority and it meant an extra seat given by Garret FitzGerald from the Republic of Ireland's contribution, which would be by proportional representation, and as a result an extra seat went to Germany, France and Italy at that time.

Sir Russell Johnston: I shall not get into the Northern Ireland argument.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): It was a Labour Government who legislated for those elections and the electoral system was chosen on a free vote of the House. It was not in the gift of the Government. This Government, who seek to dominate the House in the present unfair electoral system, understand only the terminology of an electoral coup d'etat.

Sir Russell Johnston: I stand corrected. The hon. Gentleman is right. I made a mistake. The system was introduced by a Labour Government. My point is that proportional representation is operating in a part of the United Kingdom. No one has tried to take it away. This Government have not tried to do so.

Even if one were to accept many of the frequently used criticisms of proportional representation—that it produces unstable government, that small parties have a disproportionate amount of power, that it can ruin the close ties between elected members and their constituents, none of which I accept—none of them applies to elections to the European Parliament.

As is so often the case, the Government and, tragically, still the majority of Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are extending their arguments of national self-interest to

the European debate. The real reason why the Government fail to fulfil their duty under article 138 is that they fear that once they have given in to PR for the European elections their arguments against a similar system for the United Kingdom would become untenable and that it would be the thin end of the wedge.

It was extremely disappointing that on 20 January British Labour MEPs were largely responsible for taking the debate in the European Parliament on the DeGucht proposals off the agenda. Their excuse was that they were awaiting the outcome of the Plant commission. When I asked the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) about the matter earlier, he, too, said that he was awaiting the outcome of the Plant commission.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster) *rose——*

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Lady is very beguiling.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Having sat alongside the hon. Member in the European Parliament, I really should get a word in edgeways. He talks about a common system of election throughout the EC. No two European countries operate a similar system; they all have different systems of proportional representation, and all of them hang on to them tenaciously.

Sir Russell Johnston: The common aspect is that they are all proportional, and ours is not.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): Will the hon. Gentleman draw the hon. Lady's attention to the fact that the United Kingdom must be the only nation in the Common Market that employs two very different electoral systems?

Sir Russell Johnston: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have the opportunity to draw that to the hon. Lady's attention himself.

Mr. George Robertson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Russell Johnston: May I finish the point?

I understand that Labour MEPs will now have to debate the DeGucht proposals on 10 March—a month and a half before the Plant commission's findings are due to be debated by Labour's national executive committee on 28 April—and it will be interesting to see how they come off the fence. I now offer the hon. Member for Hamilton the opportunity to come off the fence.

Mr. Robertson: The decision is taken here, not in the European Parliament. None of the proposals in the Maastricht treaty, and not even those made by the Liberal Democrats, would pass the right to make decisions about elections to the European Parliament. A decision will be taken here. The hon. Gentleman, therefore, should watch more carefully what is said and done here rather than looking to Strasbourg. He makes a perfectly good debating point, given the Liberal party's view on a common electoral system, but, leaving aside the fact that there are no real common electoral systems across the Community, all other Community countries vote on a Sunday. Is it Liberal policy that we should hold elections on a Sunday?

Sir Russell Johnston: The short answer is no, but I do not see what that has to do with it.

It is not true that a decision will be made here, as the hon. Gentleman just said, banging the Dispatch Box; the decision will be taken in the Council of Ministers, acting with unanimity. That is the problem. It would be pretty shameful if the United Kingdom blocked or vetoed a proposal of the European Parliament, and I hope that the Government do not do so.

We have consistently said that Maastricht is no ideal treaty. The majority of its faults are the direct product of the intergovernmentalism that the Government so often state that they favour. Nevertheless, the treaty is a step very much in the right direction, which, if missed now, would have disastrous consequences for the stability of the continent.

We believe that far too much power continues to be vested in the Council of Ministers. The creation of the two intergovernmental pillars—on foreign and security policy and on home affairs and justice, both of which we should have liked to be integrated into the Community—puts more power into the hands of the Council whose members, although nominally responsible to their national parliaments, still meet behind closed doors and can rarely be successfully or forcefully challenged by Back Benchers who scarcely have the time and expertise to follow every detail of Community legislation. The treaty does not do nearly as much as we had hoped to remove the democratic deficit.

9.45 pm

The irony of the Government's approach is that they consistently claim to be taking Europe out of the hands of the bureaucrats, but, at the same time, they give more power to the unaccountable Council of Ministers. The Government are, therefore, putting European Community legislation into the hands of often unelected officials and civil servants who, as we know, draw up negotiations for intergovernmental conferences—IGCs. It is small wonder that the process is increasingly regarded as cynical, complex and remote by ordinary people.

When talking about European Community institutional changes, we should think about not only Maastricht and the advance that it represents but the 1996 IGC set down in article N(2) of the treaty. Further institutional reform will certainly be required by 1996, if not before. An increase in the size of the Community will clearly create a variety of problems. Therefore, it is clear that we need a European Community constitution, which is what the Liberal Democrats called for at our conference last summer. The assize in Rome, referred to by the hon. Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), was the forerunner. Despite what the hon. Gentleman said, I thought that it was a remarkable and inspiring occasion.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I very much agree with what the hon. Member said about the dangers of more power going to officials and about the need for a constitution. Will he tell the House, and especially the Minister of State, that we were all surprised by the conclusions published following the Edinburgh Council only a short time ago. It stated that the Commission is intending to use its monopoly of the right of initiative by declining to accept requests made by the Council at informal meetings that it makes proposals for directives. When the European Commission is telling the Council that it will not allow it to make proposals for directives, even on an informal basis, there is a danger that officialdom is taking over and that the small amount of

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[Sir Teddy Taylor]

democratic control is being undermined. Will the hon. Gentleman pursue his idea for a constitution, which will prevent the Commission not only going from strength to strength but claiming powers to reject proposals from the Council?

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not think that the hon. Gentleman's fears are well founded. He will probably have noted that the Maastricht treaty enables the European Parliament for the first time to have powers of initiative like the Council, which is a positive development.

In conclusion, I make a passing reference to the strange, almost surreal, interchange between the Minister of State and the hon. Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) about federalism. They argued about what Martin Bangemann and Chancellor Kohl did or did not say. I know Martin Bangemann exceedingly well, as I sat with him when he was chairman of the Liberal group in the European Parliament. He is an absolute federalist. When he said what he said, he was merely repeating what he has been saying for many years. With great respect to the Minister of State, I must say that Helmut Kohl is also a convinced federalist. It is no use the Minister wobbling his hand. Mr. Kohl regards federalism as a decentralised form of government. He has said so umpteen times, and I am pretty sure that if one were to read the whole speech from which the Minister picked one wee bit, one would realise that he said so in Edinburgh, too.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If Chancellor Kohl is a federalist, in the sense that the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) and his party quite honourably and clearly are, why did the Federal Republic of Germany join the United Kingdom and others in blocking the single structure proposal of the Dutch Government, which the hon. Gentleman and his party would have welcomed?

Sir Russell Johnston: I do not think that that means that the Federal Republic is against federalism, or that Helmut Kohl is against federalism. There was a feeling that the Dutch proposals went too far at that time. The Minister is right that that feeling was shared by the British and the Germans, but that does not in any way affect what I have just said—that Helmut Kohl is a convinced federalist. He is. The problem is that the United Kingdom has such a tradition of centralised and unitary government, and of the supposed value of decisive government, which is seen as superior to representative government, that many find it difficult to adjust to, or even properly to understand, the idea of participating in different levels of decision making, each democratically controlled. Yet that has to be the way forward.

Tomorrow's Europe will be a political Europe. In the future it will be more important whether someone is a Christian Democrat, a Conservative, a Liberal or a Socialist than whether he is a Belgian, a Dutchman or a German. Our national identities, language and culture will not be submerged—to say that they will is a complete misreading of reality—any more than the United Kingdom has repressed Scottishness or Welshness, or done away with the assertive regionalism that distinguishes a Yorkshireman or a Devonian. A federal Europe will be open, democratic and pluralist. Maastricht is a step on that road.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) made an interesting speech in which he talked about curing the democratic deficit. It is interesting to learn that, although a structure was laid down many years ago, we shall not be able to change it from scratch. When we examine the Commission we discover that it is totally undemocratic—it is appointed by Governments. The European Parliament does its best, but it has little power; it does not initiate legislation.

I shall describe some of the increasing bureaucracy of Europe. I tabulate among the increasing layers of bureaucracy some of the planks that have come into existence, such as the European central bank system and the central bank itself. Those have unlimited power and, as has been said, the individual—and, indeed, people in Governments—will have no right to a say, or to interfere with their verdicts. Those institutions will settle what the exchange rate will be and what monetary policy will be over the course of years——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman seems to be anticipating a debate that will take place in about four days' time. We are dealing specifically with the Council, the Commission and the Parliament. The hon. Gentleman may choose any of those, or all of them, but not the central bank.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I was just making a passing reference, Mr. Morris. I thought that it was essential to bring in one or two cardinal points.

Among the other institutions is the Committee of Permanent Representatives, comprising member states and ambassadors to the Community. I appreciate that that may have some connection with article J, so perhaps I should say no more about it. Perhaps I could go on to say that there is also the Political Committee, consisting of political directors advising on common defence and security. That is also covered by article J, and as we have already dealt with that perhaps I should not say any more about it.

Then there is the Co-ordinating Committee on Justice and Home Affairs. There is also the Economic and Social Committee, which, I must emphasise, is totally unelected. Another unelected body is the Committee of the Regions, which has no power but simply makes representations.

The decision-making process in Europe is entrusted to a number of intergovernmental conferences, committees of ambassadors, central banks, Council working parties and other non-elected bodies. Then there will be parallel structures under all national Governments. Looking over the years, one can find no comparison except the regime of the Emperor Diocletian. It is extraordinary that we should have to go back so far to find a parallel.

I listened very carefully to the speeches of hon. Members. I was very impressed by the remarks of an hon. Gentleman who had gone to Brussels and spoken to one or two Commissioners. He was influenced very much by what he heard. Another hon. Member enunciated—*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. I shall be most grateful if hon. Members pay attention to the hon. Gentleman.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I understand the enthusiasm of hon. Members, as we are approaching 10 o'clock. They want to

know whether they are to be kept here for the rest of the evening. If need be, I shall continue after 10 o'clock. Otherwise I can resume on Monday.

Mr. George Robertson: The hon. Gentleman has referred to the possibility of our having to stay late into the night. Sitting behind him is the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), who has the Adjournment debate and is clutching a large wad of speaking notes. Does the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) imagine that his hon. Friend is preparing to make a speech at half-past midnight?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am not responsible for what my colleagues do or say.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I came into the Chamber to listen with great interest to the speech of my hon. Friend. I certainly did not come in for the purpose of delivering my Adjournment speech at this stage, though I am prepared to do so when the opportunity arises.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I have been enlightened.

I was referring to the contention that the European Parliament should be given additional powers, and the Commission made subsidiary to that body. *[Interruption.]* I hear someone say yes. Do hon. Members realise that the more power we give to the European Parliament, the less power the House of Commons will have? Over a period of about 20 years we shall have seen the demise of something that has been going for more than 630 years.

We must be careful about the course that we set. I am persuaded by hon. Members who have said that one of the great hazards is the possibility of the introduction of a federal system with centralised powers. Although the treaty contains few indications that there will be centralisation to any great extent, we are facing very grave dangers.

I have been given one illustration of that point, but I shall not go further on that other than to say article 3b. I said in an earlier intervention that one of the difficulties experienced is that the provision applies only to a small part of the delegated powers that may be granted. In this case, it would be unwise to say that we shall have anything other than a centralised form of Europe.

In 1996, under article N, we shall have renegotiation. In 1993, we have the Maastricht treaty.

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress.

To sit again tomorow.

Scotprime Sea Foods Ltd.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

10 pm

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I shall take the point of order, but I remind the hon. Gentleman that the time that he takes will be taken out of the Adjournment debate,

Mr. Marlow: I understand that many hon. Members are here on a three-line Whip. It is Maastricht business on a Thursday, and we had expected a vote. Have the Government told you why there has not been a vote this evening?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's expectations are clearly not always fulfilled.

10.1 pm

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): I first thank Madam Speaker. I am extremely grateful that she called this debate tonight. I also compliment her on assisting me last week to raise the issue of 23 February and for giving me the chance to highlight the matter with the Prime Minister. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for being here to reply tonight. We are talking not only about fishing or agriculture, both of which are involved, but about a serious disruption to trade with France and with the rest of Europe.

There has been serious interference with our road hauliers. They have tight schedules, and they depend on high rates of vehicle utilisation. That has been disrupted. Our electronic, pharmaceutical and mechanical engineering industries have made late deliveries, and there has been serious disruption. Orders have been lost. That is why it is fitting that the Minister responsible for Scottish industry is here to respond to the debate. He has a good reputation as a great champion of talking up Scottish causes. I hope that he will enhance that reputation tonight.

We are not talking only about Scottish interests. Every producer and every distributor in the United Kingdom who exports and who wishes to take up the European challenge is affected by what has been happening in France in recent years.

The specific incident that brings about the debate is one in which £10,000-worth of Clyde-caught fish was destroyed in a French market. The fish was not for sale in France, but was in transit to German markets. Diesel was spread over it, and it was thrown around the French marketplace. That is disgraceful.

For the company in my constituency, Scotprime Sea Foods, it meant a considerable loss of cash. It also meant that the company failed to meet a customer's order. Perhaps in cash terms that will be made up by their insurers, but the company's reputation will be damaged if it fails to fulfil the customer's requirements.

There is now a fear of repetition, and that leads to another problem. The insurers now refuse to insure that company's produce in transit. That is shameful. How can a small company such as this self-insure? It is enough to wipe it out if there is no cash compensation and no protection from the insurer.

[Mr. Phil Gallie]

What does it mean to that company? Can it stop trading? It cannot really do so, because the produce keeps coming in. Its suppliers, the Ayrshire fishermen and others, still bring in their catches. That story is common, from the salmon and scallop exporters in the Orkneys to the lobster fishermen and exporters in Cornwall, right through the United Kingdom.

What are the other consequences? Scotprime lost three clients in particular in short order. On 26 February, it was informed by a customer in south-west France that its daily requirement was cancelled for six days. The cost of the loss of exports was £1,500 to £2,000 per day on that contract. That is not a lot perhaps in national terms, but it is a lot to a small firm such as Scotprime.

A southern German client, too, cancelled the weekly delivery; some £10,000 a week was lost. Client No. 3, a Boulogne customer, cancelled an £8,000 order for Saturday 27 February. That was very serious indeed for a small company. This cannot be allowed to be ignored.

Spanish orders were under threat, but, to its credit, the company rescheduled and re-routed. It cost more, but it fulfilled the order.

This is not the first time that Scotprime has suffered in this way. At the end of June or the beginning of July last year, during the lorry drivers' dispute, the company had a lorry trapped for over a week. The cost to it was £30,000. It sought compensation with Euro-Commission assistance. It was informed that it was the responsibility of the Government of France. I wrote to the Prime Minister, and my right hon. Friend replied:

"The French Government does not intend to pay compensation";

no violence was done to lorries or loads. That is absolutely shameful. There was further advice for hauliers to claim through the French courts. That would have taken years to accomplish, and was totally impracticable.

Last week in the House, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said, when I raised the problems, that officials had already protested. He expected the French Government to pay compensation and safeguard free trade and bring the perpetrators to justice.

I welcomed that statement, but what happened thereafter? Five fishermen were arrested; 500 protested. The five were released and, to my knowledge, they remain uncharged. There was £2·5 million-worth of damage at Rungis market, and no charges have been laid. The Euro-Commissioner has been approached. I have letters from the MEP for the south of Scotland, Alex Smith, demanding redress. What has been the response to date?

There have been promises from the Euro-Commission that minimum price support will be increased and paid to the French fishermen. Vandalism and violence are rewarded, not penalised, in France, it would appear—and with the European Commission's approval. That, once again, is shameful.

There have been other instances. Last week, a ferry was diverted and Brittany Ferries' Roscoff service was cancelled for two days for fear of attack by French fishermen.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): The disasters which my hon. Friend is describing are still happening. Is he aware that a British lorry which was travelling by ferry from Poole last night suffered £35,000-worth of damage by French fishermen in the port of Cherbourg, while the French police stood by and watched? Does he agree that that disgraceful state of affairs is simply continuing?

Mr. Gallie: I suggest that that sort of thing has been going on for many weeks and, indeed, years. It is disgraceful.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): My hon. Friend mentioned the disruption to the ferries to Roscoff and other ports. Does he appreciate that that disrupts the sale of fish from the south-west of England and Scotland? Only this week, one of the Newlyn fish merchants warned me that he will have to lay off all his staff if the disruption continues for any length of time.

Mr. Gallie: I appreciate the point which my hon. Friend makes. I sympathise with him and recognise the issues which he has identified.

I shall raise another case in which I think fishermen in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) were involved. Last year, British fishermen had their nets cut by French fishermen. To be honest, that equates with acts of piracy.

I recognise the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes). We are battling for Rosyth at present. If Rosyth had a maintenance contract for servicing fleet vessels to a greater extent, perhaps we could have sent a gunboat to sort out the problem. Instead, we send letters to the European Commissioners, which does a fat lot of good.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I simply want to record the Labour party's support for the argument which the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) is making so clearly on behalf of his constituents and the way in which they have been affected. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will press the Minister on the matter.

How much longer must we tolerate such intolerable behaviour towards United Kingdom produce being exported legally within the single European market? How much longer will the French Government allow this sort of anarchy to continue?

Mr. Gallie: I identify totally with the helpful point made by the hon. Gentleman.

Instead of examining the affairs of a good, honest computer company located near the boundaries of my constituency, it would be much more appropriate and better for the Commissioner to examine the actions in France and the objectives of the European ideal.

The problem relates not simply to French fishermen. French farmers have also been at it. Since 1986, they have been attacking and hijacking British agricultural exports. Between June 1990 and February 1992, 16 cases were reported of British lamb—some of it was prime Scottish lamb—being hijacked.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): In the south-west, in my constituency of Tiverton, one of my main producers of sheep has suffered the same fate, with animals being burned in the streets of France. It is an absolute disgrace.

Mr. Gallie: I sympathise and agree with my hon. Friend. It is not simply farmers, fishermen and industrialists in the United Kingdom. The problem has grown because people in Spain, Italy, Holland and Belgium have suffered in the same way as in France. Something must be done.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): I would not like the hon. Gentleman to overlook the fact that Northern Ireland greatly depends on exporting its agricultural produce. The same thing has happened to lorryloads of Northern Ireland lamb being transported into France. It is time that this entire catalogue of assault on British produce and producers was presented to the European Court for action if necessary.

Mr. Gallie: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I said that all parts of the United Kingdom had suffered. Northern Ireland is every bit as much a part of the United Kingdom as Wales, Scotland or England. I take the hon. Gentleman's comments as they were given, and accept the points he made. If I reach the end of my speech in the not too distant future, I will address the hon. Gentleman's point about what should happen.

Once again, the French farmers have caused much disruption. Instead of being punished, they have been rewarded. In a parliamentary answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food said:

"On 31 August the French Government announced a package of national aid, costing some £120 million, giving immediate help to livestock farmers".—[*Official Report*, 15 October 1990; Vol. 177, c. 760.]

That followed a period of disruption. Once again, that was shameful.

At the end of November 1992, further action was threatened by French farmers. It was cancelled. On that occasion, the French Government promised to veto the general agreement on tariffs and trade oilseed agreement. The threat of violence seemed to work again. Surely that is not what the treaty of Rome or the Single European Act is about.

Last July, a haulier in my constituency, W. and J. Wallace, was trapped for two days in France. He lost a further four days getting out of France on a routine trip. The problem that time was the French lorry drivers. They saw the advantages to the farmers and fishermen and they rolled it over. They decided to follow their example. The French Government recognised the protest and that violence could pay off. They withdrew their proposals to impose regulations on those lorry drivers. Again, that is shameful.

The Road Hauliers Association in the United Kingdom currently has outstanding claims amounting to £325,000 against the French Government for the disruption during June and July last year. The largest claim is for some £27,000, but the figure does not include claims of less than £2,500. The members of that association are small business men. Their assets are their lorries. They need to achieve a high rate of utilisation of their vehicles. They lost two weeks of that utilisation, representing 4 per cent. of their operating time. They cannot afford that. I remind the House that the compensation still has not been paid or acknowledged by the French Government.

What actions are required now? France should be made to comply with articles 30 and 34 of the treaty of Rome to allow freedom of movement of goods within the Community. France must guarantee the safety of our lorry drivers, their vehicles and their cargo. France must compensate those who have lost so much in the past 12 months. It must bring to justice those who have created such mayhem. If it does not, the European Commission must act to ensure that it does. If it lacks the stomach to do so, the British Government must uphold the spirit of the Common Market. They, not the victims, must take the matter to the European Court or the International Court of Justice. I trust that my hon. Friend the Minister will agree.

10.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), first, on obtaining this Adjournment debate and, secondly, on what the House will agree was an excellent speech. He has raised an issue of particular importance in his constituency, but, as the attendance of hon. Members on both sides attests, it is a matter of great concern to other areas, including the south coast of England. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Morley) and the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs), in relation to Northern Ireland, have emphasised that, and I see that my hon. Friend is supported by my hon. Friends the Members for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) and for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch). I shall not waste the time of the House by remarking on the absence of the Scottish National party—indeed, I am reminded of the Liberal Democrats—from this debate.

This is a matter of great concern. My hon. Friend the Member for Ayr is right when he says that it is not limited to the fishing industry but is a matter of grave concern on more general grounds.

My hon. Friend first raised the matter with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 February. My right hon. Friend confirmed that we were leaving the French Government in absolutely no doubt that we expect them to act to safeguard free trade, to pay compensation when losses have occurred and to bring the perpetrators to book.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend that the vandalism that has taken place, first in Roscoff and then in Paris, is totally unacceptable. We have made this plain to the French Government, who have recognised their duty to ensure freedom to trade within the single market. As my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, that is the fundamental factor which underlines the purpose of having a single market.

I give my hon. Friend the assurance that the United Kingdom Government have been in touch with the French authorities since these difficulties started. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs spoke to the French Foreign Minister on 24 February to impress upon him the seriousness of the situation and to ask the French authorities to restore public order and allow the resumption of free trade in fish and fish products. My hon. Friend the Fisheries Minister has similarly been in touch with his ministerial counterpart.

Our Paris embassy has been in regular touch with the appropriate authorities in France. Our own Fisheries Department officials, including the Scottish Office's fisheries secretary, met their French opposite numbers today in London, and again made very clear to the French Government how seriously we view recent developments

Our officials made it clear, in particular, that they were carefully monitoring continuing incidents perpetrated by French fishermen and, as my hon. Friend has told the House, that these are quite unacceptable. They made the point that the cost to the British fishing industry is not restricted to particular cargoes of fish which have been

[Mr. Allan Stewart]

damaged or denied access to the French market, but extends also to all those other fishermen and fish merchants who are unable to send fish to France because they are afraid of the consequences, or because their insurers will not cover them, or for other reasons related to the present disorder among French fishermen.

The French Fisheries Ministry has taken on board these complaints, and noted in particular that further instability in the British fish market—which is a clear and likely consequence of the French actions—is itself likely further to damage the market and prices in France.

In particular, we have asked the French Government to establish, without delay, arrangements to assure the safety of lorries and cargoes from the United Kingdom, where notice of their arrival is given. I can tell the House that the initial response of the French Government to this request has been encouraging, and I very much hope that such arrangements can be put in place quickly.

Mr. Morley: I appreciate the action which the Minister has been outlining about what the Government has done about this problem, but, as has been pointed out by the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), this has been going on for some time, and there have been many such incidents. I wonder whether he would comment on that. If the French Government take no action to protect our exports, our Government should refer the matter to the European Court and seek appropriate redress, because the French are in breach of the Single European Act.

Mr. Stewart: We need quick redress, and that is what we intend to get from the French Government. I am sure that hon. Members will agree with that. If that were not to happen, we might need to have recourse to the European institutions, but I hope that the French Government will ensure the safe passage of our exports.

My hon. Friend mentioned compensation. Companies affected by the disturbance in Paris who wish to seek compensation should write initially to the local police at Rungis to seek a police statement of the incident. This can then be followed up with claims to the local prefecture. My officials of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department at Pentland house in Edinburgh would be happy to provide details and advice to Scottish businesses which believe they have a claim to compensation. Similar arrangements apply regarding the trouble at Roscoff.

I know that many companies have been disappointed that they have not received compensation for losses incurred during the strike by French lorry drivers last year to which my hon. Friend referred, but initial soundings with the French Government suggest that it may be easier to obtain compensation over the recent incidents.

My hon. Friend expressed particular concern about the destruction of a consignment of fish from Scotprime Sea Foods at the Rungis market in Paris. I know that Scotprime has an excellent record in exporting Scottish produce. This was recognised last year by its receiving the Queen's award for export achievement. That was a fine performance by a company in Ayrshire which was established only a few years ago.

I appreciate that exports to France, and through France, are of particular importance to Scotprime. The recent actions of French fishermen are a problem that the company should not have to face, and must be particularly unwelcome after last year's difficulties during the French lorry drivers' strike. Although I know that efforts are still being made by various organisations to secure compensation for losses incurred during that strike, regrettably such efforts have been unsuccessful so far.

In the few minutes that remain, may I bring the House up to date? Unquestionably, the situation in France continues to cause grave concern. As was mentioned earlier in the debate, there was a further incident last night at Cherbourg. Early reports suggest that the fish involved had been landed into Scotland by French fishermen and were being transported to France by an English company. French fishermen were therefore destroying fish which had been caught against their own quota. The value of the fish has been estimated at £55,000. Some French fishermen seem to be totally out of control, and the French Government must act to restore order.

Scottish industry has an enviable record in exporting to Europe. Fishing is no exception. Indeed, fishing and fish farming are not only in a dominant position within the United Kingdom but are recognised as major players in the European scene. I hope that Scottish businesses will continue to take the initiative in exporting fish to the French market. I congratulate my hon. Friend and give him the assurance that the Government will do everything possible to protect their right to do so.

Mr. Harris: Before my hon. Friend sits down, will he take a point that was brought out by the Cherbourg incident? British exporters are afraid to use British transport because it is immediately set upon by the thugs in France.

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why the assurance that we have from the French Government about convoying will be of assistance in meeting the legitimate concerns to which my hon. Friend refers.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 5 March 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Point of Order

9.34 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I should be grateful if you would consider a point of order arising from our proceedings on Wednesday this week, when we were dealing with Scottish questions. You may recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, South (Mr. McMaster) asked whether the Secretary of State would be meeting representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss local services.

Later in our exchanges, I intervened to ask for the Government's response to the problems of community care in Scotland. That led to the following reply from the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the Minister responsible at the Scottish Office:

"The House expected the hon. Gentleman to defend Monklands district council and its employment policies and religious discrimination. Does the hon. Gentleman not defend every action of Monklands district council? I see that he sits silent, and I am not surprised."—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 291.]

I gave the hon. Gentleman notice that I intended to refer to him, although he did not do the same to me.

That exchange led to a comment in yesterday's evening papers by the chairman of the Monklands West Conservative Association:

"It was noticeable that Tom Clarke, given full opportunity in the Commons yesterday to make his position clear, refused to do so. He sat through it all and said nothing, no doubt believing that this will show he was not involved."

Madam Speaker, you and I know the rules of the House, and you know that I was not entitled to respond to a question from a Minister at Question Time. You also know that it is disgraceful that the Minister, in an effort to influence television viewers and get the response that we saw in yesterday's evening press, made that comment which was not a contribution to an inquiry that was published yesterday—in which I had no involvement whatever—covering events after I had left Monklands district council to come to the House in 1982.

Is not it despicable that the Minister has abused the procedures of the House for cheap smears based on unsubstantiated allegations? I ask for your considered view on that abuse of our procedures.

Madam Speaker: I noticed that one or two rhetorical questions were asked during Question Time on Wednesday. Of course, there is no possibility for Members to reply to such questions and therefore no conclusions should be drawn when they do not. That fact is well understood within the House, but it may not be so to those who follow our proceedings, and I am glad to be able to make that position clear now.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Further to that point of order——

Madam Speaker: There can be no further point of order. I have dealt with the matter.

Mr. Riddick: Well, Madam Speaker, it is fair to point out that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) had a number of opportunities to respond to the accusations of corruption in Monklands district council.

Madam Speaker : Order. That is not the case. I have given my ruling and it is an abuse of the House to attempt to reopen the matter. We will now move on to the Adjournment debate.

Crime

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

Madam Speaker: Before we proceed, let me inform the House that I have had to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches between 11.30 and 1 o'clock, because there is a great deal of interest in this Adjournment motion on crime and crime prevention.

9.38 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): In starting this debate, we should reflect for a moment on the word "crime". It is a neat word to describe a complex problem—crime itself is a battle and a battleground. It is like a virus. It is not seen and it is difficult to treat, but its effects blight the lives of all too many of our fellow citizens. The language that we use to deal with it is powerful. Words like "punishment", "victim", "murder" and "arrest", stir deep emotions and powerful feelings in all of us. Crime is frustrating. Crime is frightening. Crime is complicated.

Crime is frustrating to the politician because there is no easy, off-the-shelf answer to crime. It is frustrating because there are fashions in both crime and punishment and short-term policies do not always lend themselves to the best long-term solutions. It is frustrating to the public, who rightly want to lead their lives free from fear and in relative security.

Crime is frightening, because it is not easy to predict where and when it will occur. It is frightening for victims because its effects can be both physically painful and mentally traumatic. It is frightening because it represents the fight between good and evil.

Crime is complicated: complicated to fight, because it involves many agencies; complicated because its analysis brings forward as many questions as there are answers. Like the virus, it has a unique ability to keep changing its shape and form. But, above all, crime is about its victims.

As a new Home Office Minister, I spent last Easter Monday at Blackpool police station and watched for myself the victims of crime coming in and reporting what had happened to them: the old lady crying, who had had her purse snatched and lost £270, the man whose car had been broken into. All this made me resolve never to forget that, behind all the statistics of crime, are real people whose lives have been cruelly blighted by crime. That is why the first thing that I want to put before hon. Members in this debate is our response to the victims of crime.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I hesitate to intervene in an English debate, but does the Minister agree that a great deal of crime on the streets could be reduced if there were more police officers on the streets? Does not that involve two factors? The first is the recruitment of more officers. The second is taking police officers away from the court rooms. In my part of Scotland, many of them waste hundreds of hours each week of the year because they are called to court but never have to give evidence. I am sure that the same problem exists south of the border.

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman comes from part of the kingdom—this is the Parliament of the whole kingdom—where crime levels have fallen remarkably under the Conservative Government. He may have noticed reports in the newspapers today the the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has addressed precisely the issues that underlie the hon. Gentleman's question. He talked about a thorough review of the management of his police force and putting more officers back on the beat.

It is also right that my hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, in the work to which I shall refer later, has grasped the nettle of police reform. We are anxious to respond to issues such as that which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. But at least we are taking action, not merely talking about it. Conservative Members may be interested to know that, last Sunday, when the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) was pontificating on the "Walden" programm, he mentioned the police only twice in all his rhetoric.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Did my hon. Friend note the figure announced this week, that the Commissioner of the Metropolitan police intends to take 700 police officers off paperwork and put them back on the beat? Will not that help us in London? Is it not an excellent development?

Mr. Jack: I am delighted to have my hon. Friend's endorsement of that point. I was aware of that announcement. I am delighted that the new Commissioner is so active.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Opposition Members welcome the appointment of Paul Condon, and were greatly encouraged by his first speech and his proposals. Will the Government support Mr. Condon's proposals for reorganisation within the Metropolitan police?

Mr. Jack: The thrust and theme of what Paul Condon wants to do underlies the approach which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is employing through the Sheehy inquiry and his further thoughts on improving the effectiveness of the police. To get more police officers out from behind desks on to the streets to do their vital work in the community is a cause which we have in common.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I wish to make a little progress, but I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

I mentioned that my first task was to talk about the victims of crime. I wish to put before the House what we have done to address those problems. In 1990, we published the victims charter, which set out for the first time what victims of crime have a right to expect. We support Victim Support. Its increased budget next year will be £8·4 million. That will provide 375 local victim support schemes, covering 98 per cent. of the country. It will provide practical help and emotional support to victims of crime.

We want the courts to use their powers more frequently to order offenders to compensate their victims. In 1964 a Conservative Government set up the criminal injuries compensation scheme, which last year paid out £144 million to the victims of crime. We have made it easier for vulnerable victims such as children to give evidence in court.

However, we do not forget those who are the silent victims—victims of the fear of crime—because we know that crime touches the whole community. Our response

involves the whole community. But there never has been a quick fix, and that is why we have a long-term strategy. I want today to cover the nature of the problem we face, our strategy for dealing with it, and respond to concerns that hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed and will undoubtedly express today.

Mr. Trimble: I come from the part of the United Kingdom which has the lowest crime rate. Indeed, it has the lowest crime rate of any industrialised nation in the world outside Japan. That is a point well worth remembering. It occurs to me to wonder why this is an English debate, if this is the Parliament of the United Kingdom.

The Minister referred to the Government's record with regard to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. Why does he not follow the excellent example of Northern Ireland and put the compensation of victims on a statutory basis, so that they have a right to compensation and do not depend on the exercise of discretion?

Mr. Jack: I did not notice that the title of the debate contained any delineation by geography of the kingdom of what we might cover. So keen am I to learn about crime in different parts of the kingdom that on Monday this week I visited Lisnevin to see the juvenile justice system. I realised how, for example, the secure accommodation for juveniles there made its contribution to the excellent figures to which the hon. Gentleman referred. He may well have noticed a parliamentary answer that appeared in *Hansard* at the end of last year, in which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said that he was looking at arrangements to improve the way in which our Criminal Injuries Compensation Board works.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): When my hon. Friend was at Lisnevin, did he discover that, contrary to what we have heard this week, there is potential for a regime of containment and education, and that Lisnevin has a success rate of about 69 per cent?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend makes his point in clear and unequivocal terms.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: I wish to make some progress, because I am conscious of the number of hon. Members who wish to speak in the debate.

Mrs. Roche: On Lisnevin.

Mr. Jack: I will give way on that point.

Mrs. Roche: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way on Lisnevin. Will he confirm that one of the difficulties with Lisnevin is that education is not as properly resourced as it might be? If the emphasis is to be on education, further inquiries need to be made about the lack of resources there and proper resources should be made available.

Mr. Jack: One of the reasons for visiting Lisnevin and other institutions for dealing with juvenile crime is better to inform our work to develop the thoroughgoing approach and policy that were outlined by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary earlier this week. The hon. Lady did not mention that Lisnevin tries hard to follow the tenets of the national curriculum and is inspected accordingly. So perhaps we must be less selective in our use of information

Mrs. Roche *rose*——

Mr. Jack: I should like to make a little progress now.

What is the scale and nature of the problem to be tackled? One measure is the amount of crime recorded by the police. In the 12 months to the end of June 1992, the police in England and Wales recorded 5·5 million crimes. As in previous years, 94 per cent. were crimes against property, more than half were thefts of or from vehicles or burglaries and 5 per cent. were violent crimes. The total number was 11 per cent. more than in the previous year.

Those figures are a matter of concern to us, but judging the effectiveness of our action against crime by those figures is like judging the state of the health service purely on waiting lists, for the number of crimes recorded by the police tells only part of the story. The statistics are influenced by many different factors.

I am glad to see that some sections of the press acknowledge that. We are not, as has been suggested by some, in the grip of a strange new phenomenon. Throughout the industrialised world, recorded crime has been increasing inexorably since the second world war. Some of the increase is due to more offences being included in police records, because victims are more likely to report, and the police to record, offences when they occur.

The 1992 British crime survey showed that between 1981 and 1991 the amount of crime experienced rose at half the rate recorded by the police. For violent crime, the increase in the recorded figures is because more of it is coming into the open, but the actual increase is on a lesser scale. Our policies have encouraged increased reporting of such crimes as rape, domestic violence and child abuse. Only if those crimes are brought to public attention can they be dealt with.

Recent international surveys confirm that people in England and Wales are comparatively safe. Compared with other countries in western Europe, in England the risk of being a victim of crime is about average. The risk of sexual assault is well below average, and of violent assault just below average.

Of all crimes, violent crimes cause the fiercest reaction, but our statistical indicators tell us some things about violence that may surprise the House. Young men aged 16 to 24 are the group at greatest risk of being violently assaulted and, despite what some press reporting would have us believe, women over 60 are the least at risk. Indeed, women are at much less risk of violent assault from a stranger in a public place than is generally imagined.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): On the subject of statistics, my hon. Friend will be aware that last week *The Independent*, and some weeks ago *The Sunday Express*, published figures from unpublished Home Office and police statistics showing that the latest clear-up rate had dropped in many areas, most notably in those covering the west country—the Avon and Somerset and Devon and Cornwall constabularies. That is causing great concern among my constituents and in neighboring constituencies.

First, can my hon. Friend tell the House when those figures will be published officially? Secondly, can he say

[Mr. David Nicholson]

whether any caveats should be attached to them? Will he also deal in his speech with why the clear-up rate is falling, if it is doing so, as it is a matter of grave concern?

Mr. Jack: I agree that that issue is of considerable concern. The work of analysing the data has not yet finished. The Metropolitan police, for example, have been doing a great deal of work on it. We have to accept that one of the advantages to the police of improved management information is that it shows up trends in their effectiveness. If we compare the figures for 1991 and 1992 for the 40 police forces outside the London area, we find that total arrest rates have increased. For example, the number of files that provincial forces send to the Crown prosecution service has increased and the productivity of individual police officers has risen.

The picture is complicated and part of the answer may well lie in the care that the police are taking to ensure that their decision making is correct when they make arrests and charges and that there is a high probability that safe convictions will ultimately result. We are considering that matter, but it is complicated, and I note my hon. Friend's concern.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I applaud the fact that the Home Office is making more information available to the public. Could my hon. Friend therefore explain why information about previous convictions is denied to magistrates when sentencing the people who appear before them?

Mr. Jack: It is not. If magistrates decide to call for a pre-sentence report, information on the previous record of the individual concerned is avaiablle. I shall be coming to some of the problems that underlie my hon. Friend's question about section 29(2) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and I shall certainly be interested to hear hon. Members' comments on the matter.

I was talking about the nature of crime, how we define it and what we are doing to tackle it. Our objective in tackling crime is to ensure that the public are protected, that those who commit crimes are apprehended and punished, and that every effort is made to prevent crimes from being committed in the first place. To achieve that, our strategy involves action at international, national and local level by all Government Departments, by a wide range of agencies outside government and by the whole community. It involves the Government providing a properly resourced and effective police service, well administered courts, a well managed probation service, a properly resourced prison service and a crime prevention strategy involving all Government Departments, local authorities, local agencies and local people in a broad-based partnership against crime.

The Government's record has been one of continually increasing the resources of the criminal justice system. More money has meant that police and civilian numbers in England and Wales are up by 31,600; police spending is up by 81 per cent. in real terms; the number of officers back on the beat is up; the biggest prison building programme this century is under way and 21 new prisons are to be open by the mid-1990s; and spending on the probation service, which administers punishment, is up. We have also given the police and courts more powers to deal effectively with offenders. It was the Government who introduced the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which gave the Attorney-General the right to refer excessively lenient sentences for serious offences to the Court of Appeal. This Government introduced maximum penalties of life for trafficking in hard drugs and for attempted rape. This Government introduced a maximum penalty for child cruelty of up to 10 years.

We introduced the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992 to provide tough new penalties for that so-called tragic activity of joy-riding. We introduced new powers for the courts to confiscate the assets of drug traffickers and people convicted of other profitable crimes, and we introduced the Criminal Justice Act 1991. Now we are taking steps to address the problems of and deal with the persistent juvenile offenders who are a menace to their communities.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister quickly passed by the question of increased expenditure on the criminal justice system. What is the total cost of that system and, to put matters in perspective, what is the cost of expenditure on crime prevention by comparison?

Mr. Jack: I shall deal with that in more detail, but the Home Office spends about £6·5 billion on the areas identified by the hon. Gentleman, out of its budget of just over £8 billion.

In putting before the House an unequivocal, definite and clearly stated record of our achievements, I look to hon. Members on the Opposition Benches—who are smiling—to ask what they were doing in the meantime. They were busy writing their manifesto for the general election. Those hon. Members who are pointing an accusatory finger at the Government's record on crime could find only 155 words to write on crime in their manifesto, which was less than the number that they wrote about arts and leisure.

What was their passionate statement on crime? What was their strategy and their new insight into dealing with the problem? I shall tell the House and pick out four points from their manifesto:

"fencing off waste land; demolishing derelict buildings; improving street lighting; modernising vulnerable estates".

There is no mention of being tough on crime, and the word "community" did not appear once in their manifesto. There was no mention of tough sentences. There were a limited number of ideas in that manifesto.

It is quite remarkable how the Opposition have suddenly taken an interest in crime, when for so long they have been happy to deride our efforts. This from the party which opposed us on the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, the Public Order Act 1986, and the Criminal Justice Acts of 1988 and 1991. It has consistently opposed the renewal of the prevention of terrorism Act. Was it not ironic that, last week, the Labour spokesman on Northern Ireland was telling us how the Opposition wanted to water down the PTA, as a means of trying to find a way in which they could support it, just as the IRA were bombing Warrington?

Such is the sorry record of the Opposition's thinking on crime and crime prevention. The Conservative party has a consistent record of dealing with those problems. The Opposition are the Johnny-come-latelies to the subject.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Minister started off quite well, but he is now digging himself into the hole

into which the Tory party always digs itself. The list of the actions that the Conservative Government have taken has one outstanding feature: they have not stopped the problem growing. He could have summed that up by saying that there is now one police officer for every 400 citizens, when, 20 years ago, there was one for every 600 citizens—incidentally, the number of police officers has gone up under both parties.

The issue is crime prevention—preventing it from happening. The Minister's record included nothing on that. If he looks at our manifesto and what I said in speeches in 1985 and 1986 when I was a member of the Opposition Front-Bench team on home affairs—I will send him copies of them—he will discover that we were concerned with preventing victims from becoming victims in the first place.

Mr. Jack: I have looked at the four key points in the Opposition's manifesto, and I cannot see the words "crime prevention". If one has the eyesight to read it, the words appear in little print down at the bottom of the page somewhere in the sentence that reads:

"Planning applications will be examined against crime prevention criteria."

Such is the ruthless and incisive way in which the Opposition are proposing to deal with crime.

If the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) had listened to the answer that I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), he would understand—if he had ever been in government—that the resources available to spend on the criminal justice system are finite, but at least our police productivity has increased.

Mr. Soley *rose*——

Mr. Jack: You had your say, and I want to have mine. In a moment I shall discuss crime——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. There is a particular manner of addressing hon. Members: it is "hon. Member": we do not use the word "you" in the Chamber.

Mr. Jack: I apologise if, in the fierceness of the debate, I was in any way impolite to the House and to the hon. Member for Hammersmith. He and I have debated on many occasions and the last thing that I would wish to do would be to be discourteous to him. I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for pulling me up on that point, because discipline is a key factor in dealing with crime. I am now duly disciplined.

As I said to the hon. Member for Hammersmith, I shall deal with crime prevention in a moment, but first I should like to consider the Criminal Justice Act 1991, in particular section 29 and the provisions for unit fines, which I know have caused concern to right hon. and hon. Members. I look forward to hearing their views in this debate and I assure the House that the Home Secretary and I will listen carefully to what our colleagues say. We will take their remarks seriously.

I should remind the House that the 1991 Act introduced changes that were supported by hon. Members and which I believe deserve powerful endorsement. The Act allows for longer sentences to be passed for violent and sex crimes. It ensures that all prisoners will serve at least half their sentence in prison rather than a third, as before. It gives courts a new duty to bring home to parents their responsibilities when their children offend. It enables child victims to give evidence in new ways.

There is some concern about what is happening in the criminal justice system. I hope that hon. Members will be reassured to note that the signs are that the rate of increase in nationally recorded crime in 1992 fell back to the long-term average. We are looking hard at what is going on all over the country. The police are working effectively and productively to bring offenders to justice. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is addressing the question of the structure of the police and their overall effectiveness.

A crucial part of our strategy, which addresses the point raised by the hon. Member for Hammersmith, is preventing crime in the first place. The fact that so much crime is preventable supports our view that the Government alone cannot be responsible for fighting it. We have always involved the people in the home, the neighbourhood and in the city. We want to involve them a lot more.

The word "community" has always been in the Conservative dictionary, but the Labour party has only just found what page it is on. Our policies have always been founded on sound research. The crime prevention unit of the Home Office, set up by this Government, has identified what works for individual people and individual businesses; for community groups such as crime prevention panels and neighbourhood watches; for the police, local authorities and other statutory agencies; for multi-agency partnerships and within specific Government programmes such as the safer cities programme, launched by the Home Office, the urban programme and city challenge. All that is bound together by the partnership approach.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I should like to draw my hon. Friend's attention to one issue that is causing much anxiety. All over the country, good schemes that involve young people, as volunteers, are supported strongly by the youth service and the education service. There is anxiety that, with the move to grant-maintained schools, the funding for such schemes will dry up. It would be a tragedy if a major advance in one Department's work should lead to a massive retreat in the work of another.

Mr. Jack: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point, which has not gone unnoticed by me. I am glad that my hon. Friend mentioned voluntary activity, because that work and that which we fund through the Community Development Foundation, has a great deal to do in strengthening and empowering communities to deal with crime prevention.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Jack: If the hon. Gentleman does not mind, I shall address the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) first.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): The Minister is only giving way to his hon. Friends.

Mr. Jack: I have given way generously to Opposition Members.

Mr. Dixon: The Minister is taking up a lot of time.

Mr. Jack: I note what the hon. Gentleman says; if he wants me to stop taking interventions from his hon. Friends, I shall be delighted to do so.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent, I am concerned about what is happening to the youth service, but, equally, local authorities are victims of crime. A study in 1987 showed that local authorities face a bill of £500 million because of crime. Obviously, the youth service has a contribution to make in dealing with crime and I hope that those two points will be juxtaposed.

Our strategy is to empower people to help themselves. We empower individuals by making available advice and information—for example, with 12·5 million copies of "Practical Ways to Crack Crime". It was individuals, helped by motor manufacturers, who made such a success of Car Crime Prevention Year. We empower neighbourhoods—there are now 115,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales covering more than 5 million households. We empower communities to develop their own community safety strategies. The crime concern programme set up area reduction schemes and youth crime prevention initiatives. We have commissioned a new "Good Practice Guide" to give clear practical advice to communities on what works and how to make it work.

To empower the cities, we launched the safer cities programme, which is a major crime prevention initiative. It is having positive results in combating crime and fear of it. It was launched in 1988 and there are now 20 local projects, which, between them have sponsored more than 3,000 individual crime prevention schemes. They have produced many excellent results in combating crime. The Government wish to build on that success by offering other areas the chance to participate in up to 20 new phase 2 projects.

At the national level, the fight against crime will be boosted by the new National Board for Crime Prevention; a practical vehicle for solving problems, not a talking shop. The board will generate new ideas, draw on a wide range of expertise, suggest practical local and national strategies for crime prevention and involve all sections of the community. I have been inundated with offers of help from individuals and businesses alike. I hope to make an announcement on the membership of that board shortly after Easter and I want the first board meeting to be convened in May.

The ministerial group on crime prevention will pull all the schemes together across government. There is much in the programmes of other Departments that can be and is being done to tackle aspects of crime.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Does my hon. Friend agree that the best way to prevent crime is to produce children who are predominantly law abiding and who become law-abiding adults? Does he agree that the only vehicle to do so is a stable and functioning family unit? Will the cross-departmental group consider that idea?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend has made a salient point about the contribution of the family and some of the fundamental values that ultimately enable the bulk of the population to distinguish between right and wrong. Whether we like it or not, crime is an individual act of wrongdoing. My hon. Friend has made a powerful point.

I was saying that we would pull together policies with the ministerial group on crime prevention. For example, in the Department for the Environment's city challenge programme, work on inner-city task forces and estate action programmes contribute to fighting crime. The Department of Health supports work with juvenile offenders and has programmes to reduce alcohol misuse. The Department for Education acts to reduce truancy and supports projects to prevent young people from drifting into crime. The Department of Transport has a successful programme of action to reduce crime on public transport.

Even the Treasury's fight against white-collar crime contributes to the policy, as does the Department of National Heritage, by its latest initiative to tackle satellite pornography, which I know many hon. Members will welcome and which we support by assisting the police to buttress enforcement of the Obscene Publications Act 1959.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I note that my hon. Friend says that he is assisting the police to tackle the problem of such material. Is he prepared to say that the Government are considering new legislation, as the police say that that is essential? Does my hon. Friend think that that is essential?

Mr. Jack: I have sometimes had the distasteful experience of looking at some of the disgusting, filthy and vile pornographic material available, not just for a few minutes, but for many hours. I have been looking to see what can be done practically to strengthen the effectiveness of the Obscene Publications Act. I am studying the issue, which is complex, and am left in no doubt of the feelings of the House on it.

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): Earlier, the Minister said that the Government were dealing with the problem of persistent offenders. How can the courts deal with that problem when, under section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991, they are bound to ignore previous convictions in most cases? How can the juvenile courts deal with a third offence when, under section 29, they have to ignore the previous two offences?

Mr. Jack: I hope that there will later be a lengthy contribution on that issue, and I want to listen carefully to Opposition Members' views. However, the criticism of the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) of the Criminal Justice Act should not detract from the excellence of the announcement of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary earlier this week. He described what specific, focused action we would be taking to deal with the persistent juvenile offenders whom the present system cannot handle as effectively as we would like.

I have given way generously, as I want to give hon. Members a chance to express their concerns about crime, and to respond to them. Crime may be about all the sectors of the criminal justice system that are welded together in our effective strategy on crime and crime prevention. However, dealing with crime also involves people's values, morals and commitment to join in a partnership against crime. I hope that today's debate will help all law-abiding citizens in this land to realise that—together with the Government and the other agencies that I have mentioned—they can form a truly effective partnership against crime.

10.14 am

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I welcome the debate as a sign that the Government are starting to recognise what the Labour party has been saying for some time—there is a crisis of confidence in the Government's handling of crime and a mounting chorus of pleas for action. Those pleas come from Labour Members, the police, the media and ordinary people and communities up and down the country. In the words of the shadow Home Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair):

"Recent events have been hammer blows on the conscience of the nation."

Admitting that the problem exists is only a small first step. We need action, but neither Tuesday's statement by the Home Secretary nor the Minister's opening remarks offered an analysis of Britain's crime problem or a strategy for defeating crime. In addition, the two Ministers did not make the obvious connection between Conservative policies and the growth of an environment in which crime can flourish. Home Office Ministers show no leadership qualities.

The Minister of State started with a philosophic treatise and said that crime was frustrating. It is not just frustrating; it needs to be frustrated. He acknowledged that crime involves people and that victims should come first. He said that police forces were trying to put officers back on the beart. But the Home Secretary's financial regime discourages that, and the red tape of bureaucracy created by the Government impedes police officers.

Since the general election the Government have reneged on the promises that they made. Criticism of crime is a criticism of the Government, not the police. When the Minister considers the complaint of the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson), he should note the crime record in recent years. In Avon and Somerset, there was a 212 per cent. increase in crime between 1979 and 1991, but an increase of only 8 per cent. in the number of police officers. In that period the clear-up rate decreased from 43 per cent. to 24 per cent. In Devon and Cornwall, there was a 159 per cent. increase in crime and a 7 per cent. increase in the establishment of police, with a drop from 46 per cent. to 29 per cent. in the clear-up rate. Those figures can be replicated all around the country.

How can the Minister say that he bases his comments on sound research? How can he praise programmes that he is cutting? The Minister gave a list of actions and announced some belated support for victim support schemes. We heard a little about compensation, but the best support for victims would be to cut crime through a proper national strategy to fight crime. The Minister played down the importance and public danger of car crime, particularly death-riding. I shall not use the phrase "joy-riding"—it is death-riding. The Minister played down that problem when he mentioned percentages, as though it were of minor importance. It is not.

In a disgraceful attempt to slur the Labour party, the Minister quoted selectively from our manifesto, which promised more resources for police in the fight against crime. In a mealy-mouthed way, the Conservative party promised more resources for the police, but withdrew its promise as soon as the general election was out of the way. Our manifesto promised help to prevent crime and to increase security, especially for women, who often feel more vulnerable than anyone else. It offered support for victims and contained provisions to give equal access and treatment for all before the law.

The Minister suggested that the rise in crime was not as great as everyone else perceived and that it only seemed greater, because a higher proportion of crime was being reported. That is not the belief of the police, our communities or Members of Parliament throughout the country. The Minister gave us fine words, but condemned himself by defending the Government's record, which is awful and inconsistent.

I shall simply ask one question. If everything is so wonderful and the Government are implementing such a marvellous policy on crime, why is there so much more crime after 14 years of Conservative rule?

Before and since the general election, the Labour party has advanced arguments and made contributions to the fight against crime, including the "7 Steps for Justice" policy published by my predecessor. I have referred to the comments and contributions of my hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary, but what we need—and what only the Government can deliver—is action not words. My interest in the subject is not sudden; I have taken an interest in it for 20 years, since I became a juvenile court magistrate, before I came to the House and when I worked with young offenders.

It is curious that in the Minister's comments on the fight against crime, he did not mention secure accommodation. We still have 15 and 16-year-olds in adult prisons, despite the promise given by the Home Secretary and his No. 2, the present Secretary of State for Education, in February 1991 to end remand in adult prisons. That part of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 has still not been implemented because there is still nowhere to put these people. In the two years since the promise was made, not one extra place has been created.

When the Home Office Minister made the 1991 announcement, I tabled questions asking for some basic information: how many places, how much cash, how soon? Far from being answered by the Home Office, all these questions were referred to the Secretary of State for Health. But the buck passing does not stop there. In an outrageously inaccurate comment to the press this week, the Home Secretary tried to blame Labour local authorities for the lack of secure accommodation. That was as inaccurate as the Prime Minister's suggestion of where crime is rising in this country. What about research? If the Minister is doing some research, he had better pass a little of it on to the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, neither of whom seems to know what is happening.

The Home Secretary criticised Manchester for not helping to provide more secure places. Is he not aware that the Department of Health steering group has told Manchester that the north-west has enough secure places, so it cannot bid for cash anyway? The right hon. and learned Gentleman criticised Leicester—a hung council which is perfectly willing to co-operate but is still expecting and waiting for capital and revenue cash which the Government have still not offered it.

The Home Secretary said that Nottinghamshire is not willing to help. It has the biggest secure unit in the east midlands, which it has run for 11 years. It has heard nothing from the Department of Health directly about an expansion of secure place provision. The inspectorate has started to talk about capital costs, but not about revenue

[Mr. Alun Michael]

costs. The Under-Secretary of State for Health has not yet apologised, although he must know that the information that he gave the House last week was incorrect. My local authority, South Glamorgan, has been denied the cash and has been blocked by the Welsh Office in its attempt to provide secure places locallly.

Mr. Jack: I am reluctant to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I want to pick up a couple of his points. I did talk about secure accommodation for juveniles. Secondly, we have made it abundantly clear that resources are available for local authority secure accommodation, but there have been difficulties with take-up by local authorities. Will the hon. Gentleman support the Home Secretary's announcement and give it his unequivocal backing when we bring measures to the House to enable our proposal on secure accommodation for juveniles to be put into action?

Mr. Michael: It would be much better if the Home Secretary supported our proposals, which can be brought in now, not in two or three years' time. The Minister is not actually responsible for this matter—this is part of the buck passing around the Government—and I am sure that he did not intend to mislead the House: but the money has not been made available. Only in the past week or two, under pressure from us, has the money started to become available. I think that we are succeeding in teasing some things out of the Minister and his colleagues, and not before time. If the Government are serious about secure places, they must provide the capital cash to build and the revenue cash to run these facilities.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere) *rose—*

Mr. Michael: I am dealing with the Minister's point, if the hon. Gentleman will allow me. The capital cost of a secure place is about £200,000 per place. In a reply yesterday, the Minister of State confirmed that the Home Office has provided no cash, while the health Minister confirmed that on top of refurbishment money

> "a further £680,000 is available to meet the capital cost of providing additional secure places for juvenile remands."—*[Official Report,* 3 March 1993: Vol. 220, c. *170.]*

That figure refers to 1992-93, and it means that three and two fifths places will be provided in the financial year that is coming to an end. That is really going to shock young offenders up and down the country into going straight.

The Government are not serious about their proposals for secure accommodation. Ministers dealing with this week's proposals hope to be well out of sight by the time the chickens come home to roost. The Home Secretary and the Minister of State must be accountable for the promises of their predecessors in 1991 and provide the resources needed.

Mr. Clappison: Will the hon. Gentleman answer the question that he so conspicuously has failed to answer this morning and which his hon. Friend the Minister for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) did not answer on Wednesday? Does he support the idea of the courts having a sentencing power for 12 to 15-year-olds so as to place them in secure accommodation—yes or no?

Mr. Michael: By making these proposals, the Home Secretary is catching up with proposals that the Labour party has already made. The test for the Government is not the promise of legislation next year; it is providing money for the secure places now——

Mr. Clappison *rose——*

Mr. Michael: I have answered the hon. Gentleman. If he does not have ears to hear, that is his problem, not mine——

Mr. Clappison *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot just stand there remonstrating with the hon. Member who has the Floor.

Mr. Michael: Clearly, the hon. Gentleman is not used to taking part in debates here.

Let take a closer look at this week's promise of secure training units for 11 to 15-year-olds. The statement given on Tuesday was remarkably lightweight. I like the press heading,

> "Tough guy Kenny and his popgun at the young thugs".

That accurately characterised the whole business. The Home Secretary's announcement answered not one of the 10 questions to which the Minister here today responded on Monday with the words:

> "My right hon. and learned Friend will . . . be making a statement to the House about his proposals".—*[Official Report,* 1 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. *3.]*

That answer in itself was a triumph of hope over experience. Many questions remain to be answered: how much, who pays, where will the units be? In the light of Tuesday's statement, I must tell the Minister that I will be tabling a new set of questions, and I warn him that I want answers this time. I can give him one to answer now. Where is the money coming from? Has the Treasury agreed to capital costs and revenue costs of about £100 million in the first three years, or will the money come out of existing Home Office estimates? Is the cash extra to the cost of secure places for 15 and 16-year-olds? It will have to be more than just £680,000 next year if the Government are to live up to their promises—and they are running out of time in which to do so.

Is the £13 million on top of the Department of Health's budget? And who will be paying the running costs? All these questions require answers, but they are on the Home Secretary's own ground. It was he who chose to make the announcement this week and he who chose secure accommodation as the ground of debate, and he should have done his homework and provided us with answers. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman can answer these questions, he must then answer the question: so what? Even if he fulfils his promise, it will be three years before the units are up and running, while the problem with youth crime is here now, and victims are suffering and asking for action now.

On Tuesday, I said that I was amazed that the Home Secretary had missed his big chance to be the man who tackled youth crime. I was not the only person to say that. Others share my view. The chairman of the Police Federation said:

> "The problem of persistent juvenile offenders is with us now. It won't go away. The measures announced today will not begin to protect the public until 1995-96. This is a missed opportunity which will dismay the general public. It certainly doesn't make our job easier. Legislation is needed now, not next year."

In any event, the proposals run counter to the performance of the Government in so many areas. Next to the Home

Secretary on Tuesday sat the Secretary of State for Health, silent and embarrassed. In her own constituency, the facility of Peper Harrow has fallen silent. It dealt with the rehabilitation of some of the most damaged young people in society, but it closed because the market did not work, because local authorities could not afford to use its facilities and because the Government are placing too much strain and too many unrealistic expectations on the agencies that work with young people. All this is extremely relevant to crime.

If the Home Secretary's big idea for 11 to 15-year-olds has to come from inside his budget, will there be further capping and cutting of police numbers and of cash for police authorities? Does he not know that many projects with a track record of reducing local crime are being closed under the pressure of cuts and capping and of the underfunding of community care, all of which puts enormous pressure on local authorities?

Let us get to the truth of the matter. The police have to cope with a work load that has increased by more than 115 per cent. since Mrs. Thatcher came to power. Police establishments have increased by an average 7 per cent. in that time. The clear-up rate has fallen from 41 to 29 per cent. The two authorities that I have mentioned are typical in that regard. All the Home Secretary offers is a needless and irrelevant reorganisation of police forces which will demoralise those in the front line—and this as the first step in his plan to nationalise the police.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): That last remark was unworthy of the hon. Gentleman. There are no plans whatever to nationalise the police, and I appeal to him, in a spirit of co-operation, not to say things like that, which will certainly demoralise the police.

Mr. Michael: If the hon. Gentleman can persuade his Home Secretary to assure us that not only will he not nationalise the police force but he will not disrupt the present effective pattern by creating larger, regional police forces, taking chief constables further away from the local level and an understanding of the communities that the police serve, I shall be delighted. The Government's record in removing accountability and local control from the health service, of taking everything to the centre, is not reassuring. We demand a firm reassurance from the Home Secretary and not from the hon. Gentleman who, I know, takes a great interest in the work of the police.

We need a Government who will back the police and give local authorities a statutory role to co-ordinate crime prevention and enable police, local authorities and communities to join in a dynamic partnership to tackle crime where it exists—in the community. Many senior officers and local councils are showing the way and people are asking why Ministers do not take their courage in their hands and go for it. I challenge the Government to do so.

Mr. Harry Greenway: The hon. Gentleman speaks about community involvement in police activity. Some years ago, police consultative committees were set up in all the London boroughs and for some time Lambeth, Hackney and Ealing Labour parties, among others, refused to nominate representatives to those committees. Why was that?

Mr. Michael: I am a member of a police consultative committee, which is unusual among hon. Members. Therefore, I can say with some authority that the work of those committees is extremely valuable. But it has been patchy. A great deal of activity is needed to improve the criteria on which the committees operate and the quality of information provided to them. We must also develop their role. There is a need for work in that area and there is no room for the complacency that I detected in the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the major concerns of many London boroughs—certainly all the Labour-controlled ones—relates to the ineffective monitoring of the Metropolitan police force, which is completely undemocratic? We want a police authority for London that is controlled by Londoners rather than by the Home Secretary.

Mr. Michael: I am certain that my hon. Friend is right. His suggestion will also be welcomed by the police because there is a growing recognition by the police of the need for a partnership between local authorities, local people and the police. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Ms. Ruddock) has spoken to me about the aspirations of people in London.

The Minister praised individual projects and referred to providing bits of cash here and there. However, he failed to translate success in a project to a strategy across the nation. He sees success and worth, but cannot will the resources. He and I were in distinguished company a couple of weeks ago and heard from people who had been involved in a project to cut car crime. We also heard from the police about the success of that project. Action is needed now to spread that type of project across the country. There is no point in having it in just one or two places or even a couple of hundred places.

Ministers stole a favourite Labour theme that is close to the question of police consultative committees when they recognised that the addition of a little cash and a few staff would enable a safer cities approach to cut crime. The Minister referred to that and said that it works. However, he cuts the money for such schemes and for new schemes. My hon. Friend the Member for Deptford told me about the devastation in her area and the disappointment when people there heard that their scheme was cut.

We want every city, town and village to be safer, and not just the few on this year's ministerial goodies list. Like a latter day and unrepentant Scrooge, the Minister smuggled out just before Christmas his rejection of the Morgan report which spelt out the way in which a dynamic partnership of the sort that Labour supports could contain crime and then cut it in every community. The Minister spoke with pride about setting up a new think tank. Will he listen to its conclusions or will he fail to listen to them, in the way that he failed to listen to the Morgan report and to the standing conference on car crime?

If the bulk of car crime and home burglaries were tackled, as demanded in Labour's strategy, which was set out in "Getting a grip on youth crime", and if the Morgan report were implemented, the number of victims would be reduced and the police could target their time effectively. I urge the Minister to consider those suggestions and to think again. I welcome the Home Secretary's acknowledgement that crime has social causes. Labour's view is that such causes do not minimise the personal responsibility of the individual. However, that must be

[Mr. Michael]

understood in the context of society. Perhaps the Home Secretary and the Prime Minister need to have a chat about that and decide what to think.

It is not enough for the Home Secretary or the Minister to say that there are social causes or for the Minister's predecessor to blame the growth of the "me" society, without saying who has encouraged that society for the past 14 years. We start from the assumption that no sane person would want to increase crime. If some lunatic Prime Minister wanted to create discontent, law breaking and mayhem among the young, what would he do? He would surely destroy jobs, so that idle hands were ready for the devil's work. He would close youth clubs and push up the price of leisure facilities in the name of profit.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman should listen to the end of this point. After that, I shall allow him to intervene.

Such a lunatic Prime Minister would mess about with the education service and demoralise those who teach the young. He would cut training opportunities for young people and show them a dead end. He would abolish benefit for 16 and 17-year-olds and cut finances of local authorities, to diminish the chance of positive habits being inculcated at the nursery stage. He would squeeze the finances that are available for work with young offenders, thereby preventing them from being redirected into more positive activities.

Such a Prime Minister might cut drug education and other schemes that try to make youngsters understand the dangerous world in which they are growing up. He would certainly stop providing new homes, thus driving people into homelessness or unsavoury living conditions, making it less likely that the family will survive as a unit. He might send young people to adult prisons to pick up bad habits. He might freeze police numbers and limit police cash to stop them winning their battle against crime. He would encourage selfishness and set people to compete against each other, to avoid the danger that they might co-operate. Then he would blame the victims, the parents, the police and the community for all those ills, hoping that, in fighting each other, they might forget to blame him.

Mr. Day: The hon. Gentleman repeated an assertion that is often made by the Opposition, that somehow the crime wave is linked to social deprivation.

Mr. Tony Banks: The police say that.

Mr. Day: Perhaps I could be allowed to continue. The hon. Gentleman must recognise that the undoubted social deprivation in some parts of our society is as nothing compared with the social deprivation of my grandfather who was unemployed throughout most of the 1930s. He held a family of six children together and no benefits were available. That generation had belief in itself and dignity. What has happened to the dignity of the Jarrow marchers that the hon. Gentleman should honour? Why does he make excuses when people take actions for which there are no excuses?

Mr. Michael: If the hon. Gentleman had not been so intent on intervening, he would have heard me say that social factors do not excuse crime but they need to be understood. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to reflect on the fact that if the references to the social causes are weasel words, they are being made by chief police officers throughout the country, by the Archbishop of Canterbury and by the Home Secretary. They are certainly weasel words by the Home Secretary, because he and his Cabinet colleagues do nothing to tackle these problems.

The whole problem needs to be tackled. We have not got matters out of proportion. We say that the whole picture—from social causes to firm dealings with serious and repetitive offenders—needs to be tackled. I have suggested what a lunatic Prime Minister who wanted to increase crime would do. It all sounds rather familiar because it is what the Conservative party has been doing for the past 14 years.

I do not subscribe to the conspiracy theory or the mad dictator theory. I just think that we have an incompetent Government who have lost their way. That is why I offer our formula for success in the fight against crime. I shall do so briefly because interventions have lengthened my speech.

First, we ask the Government to accept that there is a crisis of confidence and that they must provide a national strategy that respects and supports a dynamic partnership at local level. It is unfortunate that the Government have not adopted that approach. Secondly, the Government need to speed up the criminal justice system. They must ensure that there are quick decisions in dealing with juvenile offending. If there is an immediate response to offending we shall be more likely to win the battle against youth crime. Thirdly, we need to ensure that a range of options is available early and effectively. I have in mind support schemes to make cautioning work, bail enforcement schemes, early intervention to make offenders face their responsibilities and the reparation order that we suggested in our recent proposals. In other words, there must be tough and demanding approaches in the community to take a grip on youth crime.

Fourthly, we must recognise the impact of Government policy and reverse the cuts in the youth service that we experienced last year and which will be experienced again this year. We must improve housing and increase education and training opportunities. Fifthly, it is necessary to recreate the sense of community, citizenship and mutual responsibilities, which Opposition Members value and nurture in our communities. All these things need to be backed by a dynamic partnership between the police, the local authority and the community. With that, there will be a chance of reuniting people in the fight against crime.

I ask the Government to accept that while good leadership by a local authority and high-quality policing can achieve miracles for a time, it is vital that the Government accept responsibility and launch a national strategy that is designed to fight crime. They must provide the resources that will be needed for a local fight back by local people. We bear the cost anyway. The cost of car insurance has increased by 20 per cent. this year, as has the cost of house insurance. We pay for the increase in crime as we take money from our pockets, and we do so in other ways.

People throughout the United Kingdom demand that the Government recognise their responsibility to lead the fight against crime. They demand that the Government develop a coherent strategy to prevent crime, to divert youngsters from crime, to intervene quickly when

youngsters start offending and to offer opportunities to leave the path of crime. They must be tough in the community and out of it in dealing with those who will not respond. On every one of these tests, the Government are failing.

I ask the Government to recognise the strength and wisdom that lie behind the demand of my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield that they should be tough on crime and, at the same time, tough on the causes of crime. I hope that Ministers will be big enough to admit that Conservatism in recent years has failed and that Labour's radical and practical approach to crime offers the best chance of success, from imprisonment to crime prevention.

I have concentrated on youth crime because it is the area of crime with the greatest potential for speedy intervention. As we face the challenges of Europe sans frontières, of computer crime, satellite sex, video violence, international business crime and terrorism, we must remember that the bulk of crime takes place at local level among families and communities whose cohesion has been stretched to breaking point. The present generation of young people need help now, as will the young people who will follow it.

10.44 am

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): It would be wrong if I did not welcome the parts of the speech of the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael), who spoke from the Opposition Front Bench, that showed a considerable conversion by the Labour party. It seems that it is prepared to work to strengthen action against crime. That has not always been its stance.

On this issue, the country does not want party polemics. Those who sit on the Front Benches must work in co-operation to deal with a national problem. All our constituents want to see positive action to reduce all aspects of crime. I shall make three short points before talking about crime prevention. I am sorry that there has been no reference so far to crimes that are committed by those who are on bail. There is a great need to ensure that those who are on bail do not reoffend. The sentencing policy that is directed to them must be strengthened. We must do everything possible by means of harsh sentencing to ensure that we do not have to do away with the bail system. We must discourage those who are on bail from committing another crime.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will my right hon. Friend support my private Member's Bill, the Bail (Amendment) Bill, which would give the prosecution a right of appeal if magistrates granted bail against police advice? It would also reverse the burden of proof in the cases of those who, in the past 10 years, have committed offences while on bail.

Sir Peter Emery: I compliment my hon. Friend on his intervention. He knows the answer to his question. He wrote to me and I gave him an assurance that I would support his Bill. I am pleased to have the opportunity publicly to confirm my support.

I ask my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to bear in mind that Home Office-approved secure accommodation is not being used in some instances. Netherton Hall in my constituency is near to closure because local authorities are not sending offenders to it. There is a need for secure accommodation and we should ensure that it is used properly.

I urge the Home Office to encourage chief constables to promote what I call mobile foot patrols. The one feature of policing that gives the greatest confidence to our constituents is the bobby on the beat. How do we make that even more effective? I suggest that we should have a system where two police officers drive a panda car to different areas, park it and then spend half an hour or two hours patrolling an estate or town on foot. They would then return to the car and drive to another area and repeat the operation.

Areas should be selected on a random basis. It should not be know that the officers will be seen at a certain corner outside a pub every Thursday. For example, they could just turn up in a farming area and take potential criminals by surprise. Their arrival would be unknown to the public. That would ensure that the criminal could never be certain that a hand would not fall on his shoulder, followed by the question, "Here, what are you up to?" Our constituents, especially the elderly, would be given confidence by the presence of police officers. They would see that there are police about who will be able to assist them whenever that is necessary.

Mr. Wolfson: Is my right hon. Friend aware of a factor that brings home to everybody the level of crime that can exist not so far from London as well as within London? The police have told me that they cannot always leave a police car unattended in the high street in some towns because it would be vandalised immediately. That is not to detract from his suggestion. I merely wish to emphasise the seriousness of the situation.

Sir Peter Emery: I accept that that is disgraceful. I believe, however, that that is the position in only a minority of individual areas. I do not think that such vandalism would occur in the majority of places. If it did, the police would have to use bicycles in city areas rather than cars. After all, the police used to use bicycles. We do not often see police officers on bicycles these days.

The country must aim at more crime prevention. It is no use dealing just with measures to cure the illness of crime —we should take positive steps to cure the factors that cause it. The law alone is not the only means of crime prevention. At my surgeries over many years, young mothers have asked me, "How do we teach our children a code of conduct? How do we tell them how to behave?" The law does not communicate that knowledge to the ordinary adolescent or young family.

Of course, the family itself has a major role, as does education, but I was sorry that my hon. Friend the Minister did not mention the part that the Church can play in bringing about an understood code of conduct and behaviour.

I tried to persuade my own bishop of that—I would have taken the matter up with the Archbishop of Canterbury. The answer I received was that observance of the first and third commandment is all that is needed. That does not mean anything to today's young people—that is not a lesson they can understand. They want someone to spell out the way that they should behave in society—sexually, in respect of drugs, and even when driving a car.

One sees amazing aggression among car drivers today —the bad language that flows when someone overtakes

[Sir Peter Emery]

you, or if one complains when a motor cyclist cuts in front. If one did the same, the other road users would go crazy —but if one mentions such an incident in any way on pulling up at traffic lights, for example, the other motorist becomes aggressive.

Such a code of conduct should cover not only theft, good and evil, and Christian behaviour but general behaviour in society so that young people know of the standards at which they should aim. Of course, we all fall down. Many of us will be sinners at different times, but there must be a code to which people can aspire, towards which parents can guide their children, and which the Church can begin advocating.

Such a code cannot emanate only from politicians, because, as we have seen in today's debate, there will always be arguments across the Floor of the House. If we suggest something according to the Conservative code, Labour will suggest something else. The source of such a code must command universal support.

The code also cannot come only from teachers because educationists do not have the respect in the community that they once had. There is a role for not just the Church of England but all churches in setting out a code for the benefit of parents and of society generally.

Mr. Harry Greenway: One of the commandments to which my right hon. Friend alluded but did not enunciate was

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

If that commandment is respected, would not that have complete implications in achieving good behaviour in a good society?

Sir Peter Emery: Of course my hon. Friend's observation is accurate as far as it goes, but we must spell out how that works. People need to know how one should behave towards women and in society generally, person to person—in respect of feelings of homosexuality, and so on. Right and wrong must be spelt out in a way that they are not.

The Home Office is not the body to do that. We ought to challenge the churches to collaborate in devising a code of conduct to which society could aspire. If that can be achieved, efforts at crime prevention will be much more successful than they are at present.

10.54 am

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Replying to an intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), the Minister claimed that the crime rate in Scotland had fallen, and boasted that that had happened under a Conservative Government. As the Minister boasted that anything of credit in Scotland was the responsibility of the Conservative Government, he must accept responsibility also, on behalf of his Government, for the fact that, during their period in office, crime has doubled and the clear-up rate has fallen from 41 per cent. to 29 per cent.

In a speech lasting 34 minutes, the Minister hardly referred, if at all, to the causes of crime—yet unless we deal with them, crime and the number of its victims will continue to increase, and the damage to the community will worsen.

I bring to the attention of the House the case of an alleged criminal in my constituency—I will not give his name. He came to me a few weeks ago to say that his giro had been lost in the post, and that the Post Office had apologised to him when that happened in the past. He was told that he would have to wait seven weeks for a replacement.

That constituent has three small children, one of whom attends a special school, yet he was left with nothing to live on. I wrote to the Benefits Agency about that constituent and it replied that there had been a number of giro cheque irregularities involving payment of income support to the constituent in question, that the sector fraud team and the police had interviewed him on a number of occasions and that investigations were still under way. The agency referred to a history of unresolved fraud, and by doing so it said that my constituent was criminal.

Last weekend, my constituent came to see me again, and told me that the police had interviewed him only once, in December 1991. They stated then that they would test for his fingerprints on giro cheques in his name that had gone astray but which had been cashed, and that, if his fingerprints were found on them, he would be charged with fraud. That was 15 months ago. The police have not been in touch with my constituent since. He is alleged by the Benefits Agency to be a criminal, and meanwhile his children go without sufficient food. The agencies have made a mess of it, denying him milk tokens and money.

The police have had to waste time on an allegation against a law-abiding man who is trying to house and to feed a wife and three small children, one of whom is attending a special school. He has been libelled as a criminal and is deprived of the means of keeping his family because he cannot get a job and is denied income support.

Heaven knows what the temptation must be to my constituent to resort to crime, to keep his family going. He resists that temptation—yet Mr. Michael Bichard, chief executive of the Benefits Agency, who receives a salary of £79,000, wants to label my constituent a criminal, and he is going to extreme lengths to do so.

At the same time, my constituency is riven with real criminals. Recently, five minutes from my home, a gunman barged into a club on a drug run. Also near my home, a man was kidnapped on the street, taken to a house and tortured.

The Minister referred to car radio sets. In my constituency, such thefts are now so common that they are mentioned only incidentally in conversation; people do not bother to report them to the police, because they know that the police can do nothing about the problem. The actual crime figures are even higher than the Government's appalling statistics, because so many people no longer bother to report petty crime to the police.

The number of crimes reported, meanwhile, has soared. As I have said, crime in the country as a whole has doubled since the Government came to power. In the Greater Manchester police C division, which broadly covers my constituency, the crime rate is now 265 per cent. of the rate when the Government came to office. That is a far larger increase than the increase in the country as a whole.

In 1980, when the crime rate in C division was little more than a third of the rate today, the clear-up rate was a very creditable 45 per cent., well above the national average. Today, the division's clear-up rate is 29 per cent. In my constituency, the number of crimes cleared up is

now smaller than the total number of crimes—cleared up and not cleared up—committed in my constituency when the Government came to power.

Let me make it clear that I do not criticise the police in any way. Greater Manchester has a first-rate chief constable—Peter Wilmot—who has come into the city like a breath of fresh air. He is accessible to people and will travel anywhere in his area to discuss their problems.

Mr. Riddick: The last chief constable was a good man, too.

Mr. Kaufman: I am talking about the present chief constable, Mr. Peter Wilmot, for whom I have the highest regard and respect. His force does the best that it can, despite sometimes being distracted and made to waste their time investigating nonsensical charges against people such as the constituent to whom I referred earlier.

How can the police, even when they are doing their best, cope with escalating crime and insufficient resources? I have received repeated complaints from the Greater Manchester police authority about the insufficient resources allocated to them to deal with one of the highest crime rates in the country—if not the highest. Much of the crime is youth crime. We do not have the figures for C division, but we have the figures for the Greater Manchester police force areas, which show that the rate of known crime committed by those aged between 10 and 16 is 30 per cent. above the national level. Those figures are, of course, inadequate: more than seven in 10 known crimes—as distinct from those that are not even reported—are not cleared up; we therefore do not know who committed them.

Many crimes are committed through pure wickedness; there is no point in pretending otherwise. All crimes—whoever commits them, and whatever that person's motive and background—are inexcusable. The overwhelming majority of my constituents are law-abiding people who know right from wrong, are determined to lead honest and upright lives and bring up their children to follow their example. When I mix with the churchgoers, community groups and ethnic minority groups in Gorton, I observe that my constituents are overwhelmingly law-abiding people; only a small minority break the law.

None the less, it is important to understand the backgrounds both of those who keep the law and of those who break it. My constituency is one of the most poverty stricken in Britain. A test of poverty is the number of households in receipt of housing benefit: 46 per cent. of households in Manchester receive such benefit—more than in any other city, including Glasgow and Liverpool, which come second and third respectively.

In my constituency, poverty is greater than in Manchester as a whole. Among 634 constituencies in Great Britain, mine comes 28th in terms of unemployment: 18·9 per cent. of my constituents are unemployed, and 26·3 per cent. of men. More than one in four males who have left school, and whom I see in my constituency, are out of a job. The national unemployment average is 10·6 per cent., compared with 18·9 per cent. in my constituency; the male national average is 14·2 per cent. Of the 18·9 per cent. who are unemployed in my constituency, 36 per cent.—more than one in three—are aged under 25. That is 24 per cent. above the national average.

The fact that a person is unemployed certainly does not mean that that person is a criminal. The overwhelming majority of my 6,000 unemployed constituents would never even consider committing a crime, but the temptation to commit crime must be greater for the unemployed than for those in jobs and it must be especially great for young people with time on their hands.

What does such a young person do in Gorton? One option is to stay at home—if the person concerned has a home. My constituency has a high level of homelessness and bad housing. On 17 March, the Princess of Wales will open a housing association development in Longsight: it consists of just eight dwellings, but that is two more dwellings than Manchester city council has in its house-building programme for the whole city this year, and eight more than it has in its programme for the coming financial year. In the last year of the Labour Government, Manchester built 2,500 houses; this year it will build none, because the Government have taken away all the subsidies and ring-fenced the housing revenue account. My constituents cannot even secure proper repairs for their council houses.

Once, my constituency had a major engineering industry: it was a major engineering centre for the whole country. Today, the major industry is homelessness. Some private landlords are on the way to becoming millionaires on money that they have been paid to house the homeless, when that same money could be used to build hundreds of houses, to give the homeless proper homes and to keep families together.

If a young person in my constituency has no decent home in which to stay, or wants to vary his or her day by going out, where does he go? Until recently, he could have gone to look at the animals in the pets corners at Debdale park or Platt fields, but the Government's squeeze on council spending has forced Manchester to close Debdale park and to consider closing Platt fields. Both are within walking distance of most homes in my constituency.

I strongly disagree with the council's decision to close those amenities and I am campaigning against the closures. I hope that we can still save Platt fields; but the Government impose enormous financial compulsions for such cuts. Hundreds of millions of pounds have been taken away from my city council as a result of the reduction in what used to be the rate support grant, and the abolition of housing subsidies. At present, young people in my constituency can go to the Arcadia sports centre in Levenshulme or to the Victoria baths. Soon, unless the council is persuaded to change its mind, young people will be unable to visit those places, because both are to be closed.

The Prime Minister grabs headlines by boosting Manchester's Olympic bid, but the Secretary of State for the Environment is killing off the training grounds for future Olympic athletes in Manchester by squeezing local authority spending, which is forcing Manchester city council to consider such unattractive cuts. That is sickening hypocrisy from the Government.

We are losing all kinds of amenities in my constituency that could have kept young people off the streets. Some are going because of cuts forced on the council by the Government. Some are going because the Government are abolishing urban programme projects. I was astounded to hear the Minister boasting about urban programme projects, when many are going down the drain because of deliberate decisions taken by the Government. Some projects are going because the Government are cutting funding under section 11 of the Local Government Act

[Mr. Kaufman]

1966. The Home Secretary is making those cuts—the same Home Secretary who announced this week a cosmetic and almost totally useless alleged initiative to combat youth crime.

Although less than a third of all criminals are caught, the Government are spending more money on detaining them than they are on preventing crime, which, if successful, would mean that they would not have to be detained, and there would be fewer victims of crime.

I wrote to the Home Secretary three weeks ago about the cuts in section 11 funding, but he has not even bothered to send a postcard in acknowledgement.

The head teacher and staff at Stanley Grove school in Longsight—a particularly deprived part of a deprived constituency—have written to me this week in despair at the cuts in their section 11 project for multi-ethnic teaching. The Home Office agreed that project should go ahead for five years, but after eight months it is murdering the project.

Stanley Grove school had to give my constituents music lessons on the stairs to try to give them the kind of start in life that the hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) believes is somehow better than it was in the 1930s. I was a child in the 1930s, and in the working-class area of Leeds where I lived, we did not suffer from the despair or degradation that is being inflicted on my constituency by the Government. I do not have to listen to the hon. Member for Cheadle speak about his grandfather; I can talk about my own experience.

Programes that keep our community together are being cut all over my constituency. The other day, I received a cry of despair from Gorton community centre about the way in which cuts in funding are affecting their valuable and necessary work in a deprived area.

Problems grip other parts of my constituency. The Government boast of building a huge Olympic stadium in Manchester, but Abbey Hey AFC, a club in my constituency which took over derelict land and turned it into a football ground, and which gallantly provides something useful and constructive for young people to do and keeps them off the streets and away from the temptations of crime, cannot even find money for new changing rooms or a training area. That voluntary organisation cannot find a single source of funding for new changing rooms, yet the Prime Minister tells us that he is a football fan.

What may a young person do in my constituency? He can, and I am afraid too many do, take drugs—to his own, his family's and the community's deep disadvantage. He finances his habit by breaking into cars and houses and stealing radios, video players and televisions to sell. What he increasingly cannot hope for is to be helped to break the habit, even if he wishes to.

This week, I received a despairing letter from the Langley House Trust, a Christian venture in the care of ex-offenders. The right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) rightly mentioned what the Church can do to combat crime. Langley House Trust runs drug rehabilitation homes, yet it tells me:

"the Government are pulling the rug from under all drug and alcohol residential facilities"

by implementing the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 from the beginning of next month.

The trust runs 14 residential homes for the ex-offender, two of which are drug rehabilitative homes used mainly by men coming directly from prison, yet the Government are withdrawing funding from new residents. One of the homes, Chatterton Hey, provides facilities for my constituents. Do not let us hear glib nonsense from the Government about restoring offenders from society when they are taking money from a good, worthwhile organisation that wants to return offenders to the community.

Mr. Jack: I am listening to the right hon. Gentleman. Perhaps he will enlighten me, because I am a shade disappointed, about what he has done to take advantage of the Home Office's drug prevention initiative that operates in the Manchester area.

Mr. Kaufman: I do not want to hear such glib nonsense from the Minister, who made a complacent speech. I was talking about the Langley House Trust, which does good work for my constituents and which wrote to me on a non-partisan basis, as it did to other hon. Members in my area, saying that the rug is being pulled from under its work because the Secretary of State for Health is taking money that it could have used for drug rehabilitation.

I will not accept complacent rubbish from Ministers. My constituents are suffering from degradation, despair and poverty. Conservative Members smirk and sneer, while my constituents suffer as a result of what they have done. I am not having it.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I am sure that my right hon. Friend will agree that Ministers would not be so supercilious if they had to face, as we do, the real tragedy and crime that emanates from drug abuse. Drug and alcohol projects throughout the country are facing closure because the Government have backtracked on their commitment to ring-fence money for drug and alcohol projects within community care funding. The Secretary of State gave a commitment on the Floor of the House, but he has backtracked on it and, ultimately, drug and alcohol projects will have to close.

Mr. Kaufman: My hon. Friend is right. I am being assailed by organisations that want to do good and to help but which are not being helped by the Government's withdrawal of funding.

What can young people in my constituency do? Where can they go? They can go into the centre of the city and beg. We have more beggars in Manchester in 1993 than at any time in the 23 years for which I have represented part of the city.

When constructive places of resort such as the sports centre and other projects are shutting down, my young constituents will go to the commercial amusement arcades that litter the streets of my constituency like scabs. The city council tried to refuse planning permission for those arcades, but it gave up when the Secretary of State for the Environment upheld planning appeals from those wanting to take money from my young constituents without giving them anything in return.

I do not know where those who use the arcades get the money to put in the machines. I am sure that most come by it honestly, but do all of them? How many are at risk

of being picked up and started along the road that turns them into the rent boys who are another feature of life in the city of Manchester?

The Government are destroying the social cohesion of my constituency. Good, hard-working, patriotic people who love their country, many of whom have served it in the armed forces or in other ways, and who love their city, are seeing the social fabric disintegrate before their eyes. The greater the sense of community, the smaller the chance for crime. My constituents fight crime by being members of home watch schemes. They attend police consultative committees, of which we have a network in my constituency. They work with the police, and they work to maintain the community. They work to maintain their own and their families' self-respect, but they are beginning to lose the battle. The odds stacked against them by the Government are just too high.

Young people, sometimes small children, are being arraigned for alleged crimes. Every criminal aged 13 or under is a child not only of his or her parents but of this Government, born, brought up and educated—if one can call what they receive an education—often with no prospect of a job or a clear vision of any future.

Crime is to be wholly condemned. It should be detected and punished, but, above all, it should be prevented. It is no good the Government having a programme to deal with the relatively few offenders who are caught. We need a programme to prevent crime, and that can be achieved only by the social regeneration of the inner cities to give a fair chance to the fine people who live there, to the fine people who live in my constituency.

The crime rate has increased massively under this Government. The crime committed by this Government against my constituents can never be forgiven.

11.21 am

Mr. Warren Hawksley (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in the debate. It is an especially important debate now that crime seems to have moved centre stage of the political scene. It is right that it should have done so because the public are alarmed. In Birmingham, there has been an increase of about 20 per cent. in the number of schoolchildren arrested last year. That is why the public are demanding speedier action from the Government.

I was disappointed by the statement made on Tuesday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. It was far too narrow. It should have shown more urgency in tackling the problem with which he was dealing. The proposals for secure accommodation units were all very well. The Opposition have challenged the idea today, but it seemed to have all-party support. Why, then, can action not be taken at once? Why do we have to wait for perhaps two or three years before even that measure is introduced?

I suggest that we also need to consider less expensive options of secure accommodation. We have a surplus supply of ex-military establishments which were quite good at keeping out the Irish Republican Army and would keep the youngsters in. Do we need to worry that such establishments are spartan? I suggest not. They should not be luxurious abodes for young criminals.

The problems that we face stem to a great extent from years spent listening to liberals, do-gooders, social workers and Home Office advisers. They have worried for too long about the offender and have not worried half enough about the victim. We now need a much stronger policy of deterrence. I do not wish to discuss at length corporal punishment or the ultimate deterrent of capital punishment, although I support both without reservation. I was disappointed that my right hon. and learned Friend did not respond to a question about corporal punishment on Tuesday. During my previous incarnation in the House, I tabled amendments—one in Committee and once on the Floor of the House—to try to reintroduce corporal punishment for crimes of violence by youngsters. Had they been accepted, there might well have been a reduction in today's figures.

The Government could tackle the problems straight away. It was important that the Home Secretary agreed on Tuesday to take up the question of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The Minister of State, Home Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack), said that he looked forward to hearing our views. My views are clear: I believe that section 29 must be amended and we do not need to wait to do that. I also believe that unit fines, the system under which unemployed people, for example, are not punished at anything near the correct level, must be examined. There is disillusionment among magistrates, especially over the unit fining system. I hope that action will be taken quickly so that we can retain the very good list of magistrates we have.

Not long ago, I read that the Home Secretary was to ask the new Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis why his force was not catching more criminals and why the clear-up rate was not higher. We know that we could ask the same question of nearly every chief constable. I offer a solution that will save my right hon. and learned Friend contacting chief constables all over the country. I have it in my left hand. It is a batch of 59 forms that a police constable has to deal with when he arrests someone for a minor offence such as shoplifting. I am assured that even an experienced officer will take at least two hours to fill them in. That is not good enough. We must get rid of the bureaucracy. I served on the Standing Committee that considered the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. My then hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds, Sir Eldon Griffiths, and I warned that bureaucracy would take up too much of a policeman's time. It is now happening with a vengeance.

The other day, the chief superintendent of my area went to one of his major police stations at 3 am. He was rather surprised to find all the police cars parked in the garage. He inquired what was happening and found that each officer had arrested a suspect and was spending at least two hours on the paperwork, writing out reports. Would it not have been better for those officers to be on the streets, trying to catch more criminals? Please let us ignore the campaigns of the civil liberties lobby, which wants such bureaucracy to tie up police officers who should spend their time doing far more important work.

What can we do about cautioning? According to the chief constable of the west midlands, it is another aspect of the police officers' work which they have had to implement to the best of their ability, following guidelines issued by the Home Office. I am glad that Chief Superintendent Mike Holder of my area has found a way around the cautioning policy. Because the number of crimes committed means that there is a state of emergency, he is able to take action. He is reported in *The Birmingham Post* as saying:

[Mr. Warren Hawksley]

"We don't caution for drink-driving, so why should we caution someone for taking a car without authority and driving it away? Either way, someone could get killed. In our division, 60 per cent., of crime is car related or involves burglary of houses or factories. We will prosecute when there is enough evidence."

I am glad that cautioning has been suspended in those circumstances. In Wolverhampton last year, there was an increase of about 50 per cent., in cautions and a drop in the number of prosecutions.

I hope that we shall hear today that advice is being sent to all forces that the cautioning policy can be altered and that a tougher line can be taken throughout the country.

The Minister mentioned the Bail Act. Too many offences are being committed while youngsters, in particular, are out on bail. Something must be done quickly. It is not good enough to say that we will examine the matter, discuss it and decide what happens. We must act now.

Since 1979, the size of the police force has been increased and police officers are better paid. However, we can do more—and quickly—to help them. I believe that assault on a police officer should carry an automatic custodial sentence. We should give police officers the protection to which they are entitled when doing our duty. I hope—and I have not heard arguments against it—that the forces that wish to do so will be allowed to carry out trials with the side-handled baton. The American baton might well protect and save many of the injuries from which our officers suffer. *[Interruption.]* Labour Members may laugh if they wish at the fact that 1,720 officers in the West Midlands area were injured in 1992 and 6,682 working days were lost through injury. If police officers were given batons that would protect and save them, we should be doing good for them and for our constituents. That is important.

I should like to raise two other points. First, we are not using special constables to the full advantage. They are a deterrent if they are on the beat. They can be used when they are most needed in the evenings and at weekends. In the West Midlands, only 955 special constables, out of an establishment of 1,400, are in place.

For a long time, I have argued that we should consider moving towards a Territorial Army-type force with honorariums being paid. I am glad that the Home Office has taken up the suggestion to the extent that the Dorset force is allowed to do so as an experiment. I have seen the Dorset force in operation. I hope that the experiment will continue and be extended. I ask the Government to put pressure on the Treasury to allow the honorarium to be paid without deduction of tax. It is ludicrous. In the case of the Territorial Army, there is no payment of tax, but in the experimental system in Dorset, the officers are liable to tax. I know that the Home Office has some sympathy with this point. I hope that it can persuade the Treasury to respond constructively, possibly as early as next week's Budget.

A final question that is important in tackling the problems of crime is the right to silence. I am not a lawyer, but I am worried about the way in which the right to silence has been used. We saw the case of two parents where there was a young child attacked. Because the parents used their right to silence, the police could not move the investigation further forward. Only yesterday, we saw the example of the osteopath who was killed by a hit and run driver who was moving away from a petrol station without having paid for his petrol. I remind the House of the press report in *The Daily Telegraph* yesterday on this important issue:

"A motorist who knocked down a motorcyclist as he fled from a petrol station without paying"

for his petrol

"could escape charges because of the right to silence laws . . . Mr. Timothy Brown, 32, an osteopath, died after his motorcycle was hit by a Honda Accord as it was driven away from the garage in Beaconsfield, Bucks, in November last year.

But although the owner of the car has been traced, he has refused to answer police questions and charges relating to the death had not been brought."

It is a tragedy. I see no reason why the right to silence should be maintained. People who are innocent should have no fear of expressing their innocence. If they are guilty, they should be dealt with by the law.

I hope that I have expressed a strong wish for Government action. It is not too late for such action, but it must be done quickly. I ask the Government not to talk about what will happen in a year's time. They should look at the bureaucracy. I was horrified to find that so much paperwork had to be done by police officers. I hope that the Minister will give meaningful answers and I hope that action will be taken to help our constituents and ensure that crime is defeated in the United Kingdom.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are now in the period of the 10-minute restriction on speeches.

11.34 am

Mr. John Fraser (Norwood): I should like to say a few words to defend and bring some understanding of my constituents, as well as suggest one or two solutions. In 10 minutes, I think that only one or two suggestions per Member are possible

It is important to stand up for the rights of those who are innocent and to defend the rights of constituents to be physically safe in their homes or on the streets. One of the most precious civil rights that people have is to be able to go about their business safely. The civil rights of ordinary citizens in the borough of Lambeth in my constituency are breached too frequently.

I shall give the House the flavour of that by quoting a few headlines from a single issue of *South London Press*. The main story on the front page says:

"Gun-toting teenagers as young as 13 forced a man to hand over his wallet in a robbery which has stunned police."

That took place in Streatham in my borough. I quote from the next page:

"Woman was raped in a squalid, rundown garage after being attacked at knife-point. The 27-year-old woman was walking home along Palace Road".

The story goes on about an attack with a Stanley knife.

I turn to the next page:

"A mother-of-two charged with murdering her common-law husband was granted bail at Camberwell Magistrates Court on Wednesday"

The accused, who lives in my constituency, had knifed her husband to death.

I continue:

"A cashier at the Mecca bingo hall, in Streatham Hill, had £18 snatched from her hand by two men who ran off at around 9 p.m. on Sunday . . . A 28-year-old man appeared at Camberwell Magistrates' Court on Tuesday, after a neighbour was allegedly attacked and injured with a 3ft sabre

. . . Clinton Rowe (21), of Dalyell Road, was committed in custody for trial at the Old Bailey from Camberwell Magistrates Court, on Wednesday, charged with attempting to murder"

someone

"at Tintern Street, on December 14 last year . . . Baby killer Christine Gibelli's mental state was not taken seriously by the authorities who failed to diagnose her illness"

That is a case of infanticide in which someone was sent to an institution.

I turn to the next page:

"A knife-wielding rapist who subjected a young wife to a seven-hour sex ordeal after grabbing her on a busy pavement"

I am glad to say that that is out of my borough: that is at London bridge. The next story is back in the constituency.

Mr. Day: None of this has anything to do with social deprivation.

Mr. Fraser: I shall come to that in a moment.

I continue:

"A Brixton man was remanded in custody at Camberwell Magistrates' Court charged with the murder of Paul Baker in a squat"

in my constituency.

The final story does not relate to south London: it relates to Hammersmith but involves a person in my borough:

"A trainee lawyer was gunned down in cold blood for a few pence while he helped out at a friend's off-licence."

Those are just a few, I was going to say headlines, in the *South London Press*. But they are not headlines. Two of the murders feature in the miscellaneous column. Such is the level of crime in our area that they do not feature as headlines. They are titbits in the gossip column that somebody has been murdered by someone else. That is the scale of the headlines and titbits in the local paper for only one week.

The cold statistics, rather than the headlines and titbits, are appalling. I mention robbery with violence as an example. That involves an attack on a person as well as an attack on property, so it is a good indicator of the state of our society.

In my borough, the chance of being robbed is 992 per 10,000 of the population. One is eight times more likely to suffer robbery in Lambeth than in Merseyside or Manchester and six times more likely than in the west midlands. The hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) interrupted me to ask about deprivation. Perhaps the following statistic is one of the indicators. One is 14 times more likely to be attacked in the street and robbed in Lambeth than in Kingston upon Thames. The difference between the two must be that one is an affluent area and the other is a poor area.

Let us compare my borough with Kingston upon Thames for other crimes. In Lambeth, one is 14 times more likely to be robbed, three and a half times more likely to suffer a crime of personal violence, four times more likely to suffer criminal damage and twice as likely to suffer burglary.

I do not want to give the wrong impression. I do not represent or live in a concrete jungle. I echo the words of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman): most people are decent, honest and hard working. If they are not working, at least they are honest people who want to contribute to society. They want to have a safe community and make a positive contribution to it. So I am not all that pessimistic.

On the whole, despite the figures that I have given, mine is a relatively safe area. However, once people have been burgled, their quality of life can be irreparably changed. In many of the housing cases that now come to me, people wish to move not because of the state of repair of their accommodation but because they have been burgled six or seven times. They can no longer afford to live there.

The other lesson that I have learnt is that the victims of crime are on the whole poor people, not rich people. If my stereo is taken, I get a better stereo on the insurance. I am relatively affluent. I was once lobbied by a probation officer, who told me that it was my own fault that I was burgled, because I had only one lock on the door and had not done enough to the windows. The probation service talks about being non-judgmental, but occasionally it is a good idea to tell people that they have been naughty or wicked.

As for the causes of crime, there is no simple relationship between unemployment, poverty and crime. If a group of monks who had taken vows of poverty found themselves unemployed, they would not automatically turn to crime. However, there is a coincidence between crime and conditions such as high unemployment and poverty, unfriendly types of tenure, indefensible space, poor housing and other pressures on families and other unfriendly conditions.

High mobility of the population tends to create crime or criminal circumstances. Medical practitioners tell us that there is a 40 per cent. turnover of population in some of our inner-London areas. That contributes to circumstances in which crime rises.

Crime is committed by a relatively small number of people. On the whole, their behaviour is predictable. One finds previous convictions, a record of truancy, anti-social attitudes and a weak family background. One can usually predict that such circumstances will lead to crime. The job of the Home Office and the law enforcement authorities is to target those who are most at risk.

Secondly, we should deal with crime seriously and intelligently. Our intelligence and experience tell us that secure accommodation such as borstals and attendance centres, although it might be tough on criminals, often creates circumstances that may lead to more crime being committed. There is a strong case for more remand into secure accommodation of people who are likely to commit offences on bail.

Thirdly, we should concentrate on measures to increase people's values. A set of circumstances, including poverty, can translate into a corrosion of values. We must set up a programme to rebuild values. I am afraid that so much of what the Government do breaks down values. They break the values that come from nursery education. They destroy our sports facilities. Football pitches are being closed. Youth clubs are having to close. We have massive homelessness. Nothing can do more damage to the family and the child than the circumstances of homelessness.

If the Government really want to do something about crime, they should examine the circumstances of crime and the predictability of behaviour and do something to restore the family values which have been hurt and damaged even further by Government programmes.

11.45 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I welcome the debate, because my constituents have had enough of the incidence of crime, in Britain as a whole and in the constituency. What is more, so have I. Hardly a day goes by without a shocking headline in the *Huddersfield Daily Examiner* telling us that someone has been mugged, robbed or raped or, in one or two cases, murdered. So this is a timely debate.

My constituents are not worried about violent crime alone. They are also worried about having their houses or cars broken into or their cars stolen. So we must not simply hit the violent criminal: we must ensure that all forms of crime are tackled.

As Opposition Members have rightly said, we should consider some of the underlying causes of the increase in crime. We know that society has changed enormously in the past 20 or 30 years. Masud Hoghugi, the director of the Aycliffe centre for children, has said many interesting things about crime. He has said:

"This is pay-back time for the permissive society."

That is right. We all know that, in the past 20 or 30 years, a dependency culture has been fostered by the liberal establishment and, indeed, by Opposition Members. We have seen how the authority of the Church of England has been steadily eroded so that there is now a moral vacuum.

More and more children do not have the disciplining figure of a father, because about 30 per cent. of all births take place outside marriage. In some inner-city areas, the figure is 50 per cent. I wish that the Archbishop of York would tackle some of the difficult moral issues instead of taking the easy route of attacking the Government. *[Interruption.]* Attacking the Government is dead easy—everyone does that—but talking about morality is much more difficult.

We see violence on our television screens, on videos and in cinemas. I take this opportunity to commend Sir Anthony Hopkins, who is having second thoughts about appearing in a sequel to "The Silence of the Lambs", because he is worried about the effect of violence on cinema screens. We all know that drugs are a significant contributory factor to crime.

I do not doubt that poverty and unemployment exacerbate crime. However, to suggest that they are behind much of today's crime is far too easy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) said, the same problems existed in the 1930s, yet we did not have today's high levels of crime, because there was far greater morality and the family unit was far stronger.

Once we have examined the causes of crime, there comes a time when we have to stop understanding those causes and take action to protect the public, provide deterrents and impose punishment for wrongdoing. Many of the young people who get into trouble are cautioned in the first instance. That is entirely appropriate, but a caution should be given only for the first and perhaps the second instance but no more than that.

Corporal punishment would be extremely appropriate for many young people. I know that the liberal establishment would scoff at such an idea, but outside this House in my constituency and in the real world, I find that the vast majority of people agree with me. They have an instinctive belief and knowledge that corporal punishment is an appropriate form of discipline for young people. Of course, it is unpleasant and it is slightly humiliating for them, but one hopes that it will ensure that they never wish to experience it again. Corporal punishment could also teach some young people how unpleasant violence is. I wonder whether they realise that when they are mugging people in the street.

I support community sentences as a form of punishment and believe that we should make parents appear before courts with their children. However, some persistent young offenders need to be locked up simply to protect society, and I welcome the statement by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary earlier this week about secure units.

In reality, recent legislation has made it more difficult for courts to take appropriately tough action in certain cases. It seems to me that the Home Office has two objectives: first, to keep as many people out of prison as possible; secondly, to ensure that no innocent person goes to prison. Those are laudatory objectives, but I fear that, in attempting to fulfil them, we have made it all the more difficult for the police to secure convictions.

When the prison population figures were recently released and showed a significant reduction, the Home Office saw it as a sign of success, but I saw it as a sign of failure. While crime is increasing, we need to take action to stop it.

I acknowledge that we have been tough over violent and sexual crimes, and we have also been tough on middle-class business men driving their cars down the motorway. A means-related fines system is an abomination, and we must get rid of it as soon as possible. The law needs to be seen to be fair, and such a system clearly is not fair.

I referred earlier to my local newspaper. Its headlines do not help a climate of law and order: for example,

"Worst offender given smallest fine",

because of the means-related fines system; and

"'Law will not let us deal with teenage thugs' says police chief".

The latter expresses the feelings of frustration felt by many police officers, and some justices of the peace have resigned in disgust at recent legislation.

As we know, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 stops courts taking previous convictions into account, which is wrong. In the majority of cases, courts cannot do so, contrary to what the Minister of State said in answer to my intervention.

A senior police officer from the West Yorkshire force proved to me that a court cannot impose a security requirement on juveniles aged 15,

"unless the offender is charged with a violent, sexual offence or an offence where an adult is punishable with 14 years imprisonment. Such an offence precludes burglary from shop premises and thefts of motor vehicles. The effect of this is that an offender who steals a car, ramraids into a shop, and injures a passer-by cannot be remanded in custody by the court."

That is wrong and the law needs to be changed if it is having that effect.

I totally agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley) about the burden of administration on too many police officers.

Mr. Mike O'Brien *rose*——

Mr. Riddick: I do not have time to give way.

Some officers take hours to transcribe interviews with suspects, which is absolute nonsense. We have to do something about it.

In the short time left to me, I make a plea to my hon. Friend the Minister to abolish the right to silence. It helps the criminal, and it is not a problem for someone who has nothing to hide. Innocent people will be happy to tell the police where they were and what they were doing at a particular time. If that law is good enough in Northern Ireland, it should be good enough on the mainland. Juries and judges should be allowed to draw a certain inference from a suspect's refusal to respond to police questions.

I have little confidence in the royal commission, which is staffed by five lawyers, one sociologist, one psychiatrist, one industrialist and one policeman. I hope that, even if the commission does not come out against the right to silence, my hon. Friend will ignore it in that respect.

I have no intention of listening to Opposition Members, who are Johnny-come-latelies on this issue. When they were last in power, they had a terrible record.

11.55 am

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The Minister concluded his speech by saying that he considered that the Government policies that he had described were effective. Almost every speech from the Conservative Benches has reflected a deep and sharp criticism of their effectiveness. If the debate achieves nothing else, I hope that the Minister's complacency will be severely shaken. However, in drawing his attention to speeches by Conservative Members, I do not wish to give any sign of support for some of the remedies to our crime problems that they mentioned.

The Minister should be in no doubt that there is widespread anxiety and anger in many communities about increasing crime levels and the attack on the security of society that they represent. That has been manifested by such dangerous new developments as the growth of vigilante movements, which have given rise to new crimes.

Some vigilantes have appeared before the courts. In January, in the High Court in Cardiff, we heard how a gang of residents from a housing estate near Tonypandy had beaten to death a man whom they suspected of burglary. In December, a court in Newcastle heard how a business man stabbed a suspected car vandal in an effort to stem a crime wave. Last July, 100 residents on a Scottish housing estate formed a human barricade to stop youths from causing disturbances. In Wales, one village mounted nightly road blocks and checked every car that wanted to pass through.

Those examples do not represent a society that is "at ease with itself", to quote the Prime Minister, but a society in which law and order does not prevail and in which, despite the £6·5 billion that the Minister acknowledged was spent on different aspects of the criminal justice system for which his Department has responsibility, citizens do not consider that they are getting value for money.

The reality is that the Minister's measures of achievement and effectiveness were encapsulated in a speech which listed measures that were brought before the House to stick plaster on a number of isolated criminal offences. I have carried out a little modest research on how much work has been done under the six Home Secretaries who have occupied the Government Bench since the Conservatives came to office. It is not necessarily entirely accurate, but it gives some impression of what has happened.

Since 1979, 62 pieces of legislation relating to new offences, the courts and the powers and organisation of the police have been passed. The Government have not attempted to implement the Law Commission's proposal that we should seek to codify our criminal law and to bring some order to its chaotic statute book, but they have introduced at least 16 new offences. Those offences concern crossbows, drug trafficking, firearms, forgery, indecent display, supply of intoxicating substances, malicious communications, nuclear materials, female circumcision, the taking of hostages, joy riding, dangerous drugs, computer misuse and war crimes. That is just a selection and I have no doubt that there are others.

Lest Conservative Members think that by dreaming up new offences we shall get to the bottom of the problem of crime, let them cast their minds back on what we have been about in this place in the past decade under a Conservative Administration.

A number of Conservative Members have tried to suggest another new treatment of the crime of offending on bail. It is not as simple as they have made out. A Home Office research paper by Patricia Morgan states:

> "To bring about the twin benefits of minimising offending on bail while not increasing the remand population unnecessarily, remands in custody should be reserved for those who would commit offences if granted bail. But identifying this group is no easy task. The problem is that, even in the high-risk group, such as those between the ages of 17 and 20, who have been charged with burglary or mobile offences, fewer persons offend on bail than do not offend on bail. Better ways of selecting within these groups are needed."

That seems like common sense, and a warning that there is no simple answer to dealing with such problems by yet another little Bill produced at the drop of a hat when a nasty headline appears in newspapers and the Home Secretary wants to pretend that he is doing something about it.

The reality, as hon. Members on both sides of the House have testified, is that crime figures have gone up. However they are measured, even by the crime survey of the Government, which shows a substantially slower rate of increase than does the rate of increase in recorded offences, but none the less shows at least a 50 per cent. increase since the Government took office, the figures are appalling. They in no way reflect the hardship, anxiety and misery that individual crimes cause in the lives of our citizens.

In the brief time that has been left to me as Liberal Democrat spokesman—I regret that it is so short—I want to address one issue on which I believe that the Government's response to the challenge has been far from adequate: crime prevention, which the debate, at least in part, is about.

The Minister says that £6·5 billion is spent on the criminal justice system. He did not answer my question about how many millions are spent on crime prevention, but he probably knows the answer.

Mr. Jack *rose*——

Mr. Maclennan: No. The hon. Gentleman must allow me not to give way, because of the time factor. Because it is so important, however, perhaps it would be worth hearing what he has to say—so, yes, do tell us just what that figure is.

Mr. Jack: Every year, £166 million is spent.

Mr. Maclennan: So £166 million is set aside from £6·5 billion—the disproportion is absolutely striking; and that sum is being reduced still further. The schemes that have been seen to be effective are not being backed up by successors.

The reality is that the best hope for crime reduction flows from the reduction of opportunities to commit crime, by targeting crime prevention measures. I am talking about the kind of thing that the Minister had the effrontery to laugh at. He read out some passages from the Labour party manifesto which dealt with the practical problem of reducing the likelihood of burglaries in inner-city areas and criticised them.

The Minister thought that the provision of lighting was rather amusing. If one has to live in a dark corner, in a Victorian dwelling, lighting is extremely important. If the Government smirked and sniggered less and paid more attention to such improvements, they might have a better record to boast about to the House than they have today.

Crime prevention offers the best hope of reducing our crime figures to something more tolerable in a civilised society. That means ensuring the co-operation of local authorities with the police and businesses, to find ways in which to target the protection of the most vulnerable communities. It can be done, it has been done and it will be done better if best practice is built upon by the Home Office and extended to the communities, as the Liberal Democrats are doing through their local authorities.

12.5 pm

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): The most fundamental duty of any Government is defence, whether that be defending citizens from antagonists abroad or unruly elements at home. Indeed, the very essence of a free and constitutional Government is that they keep lawlessness at bay and produce security. I hope that the Minister meant what he said about listening to today's debate.

Many of my constituents feel far from secure. They are either the victims of crime or feel constantly threatened by the wave of violence and theft that is engulfing this country. They are not the people who inhabit inner-city slums, the so-called "no-go" areas of urban deprivation and violence. They live in towns and villages, but they do not feel secure unless their houses are wired up with an elaborate alarm system. They do not go away for the weekend because they are worried about being burgled. That can only suggest one thing: there has been a failure in the rule of law. The House should face up to the fact that there is a crisis of confidence in the country. When people no longer feel safe in their homes it is time to act; time to shift the balance of power away from the criminals.

I welcomed the Home Secretary's announcement this week on juvenile offenders. For the first time, those hooligans will be locked up and, as far as I am concerned, they can throw away the key. Will the Minister assure me, however, that those institutions will not be holiday camps, but prison camps where thugs can learn the meaning of right and wrong? I hope that the Minister will note that it is important that they are run not by failed social workers, who are associated with that lot on the Opposition Benches, but by sergeant-majors.

The Home Secretary has rightly said that recorded crime has risen constantly since the second world war, in times of boom and bust. That tells me that the tack that we have followed so far has failed and that urgent and forceful measures are required to stop the sickening spiral into lawlessness.

Tragically, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary continues to offer the sort of sugar-coated schemes that have been tried and failed. He advocates, for instance, a wide range of crime prevention initiatives to encourage all sectors of the community to work with the police to prevent crime. However, I believe that we should be concentrating not on the law-abiding sections of society, in the hope that they will form neighbourhood watch schemes, good as they are, but on real punishments that will stop people even contemplating crime or make those who have offended wish that they never had.

In international affairs, we have learnt to appreciate the values of effective deterrents and the use of force. It was the threat of nuclear weapons that prevented the communist bloc from transgressing the iron curtain, not the niceties of diplomacy. Despite the views of the CND crackpots on the Opposition Benches, it has always been apparent that the only language that some people understand is that of force. Unfortunately, when it comes to domestic affairs, we seem to forget that basic fact of life. We are now paying the price and the penalty for that.

Although I recognise that the root of crime must be tackled, we still need to act now to deal with the problems that are staring us right in the face. The most important distinguishing characteristic of crime is that it confers on the state the legal right to punish the offender.

Sadly, all too often, attention is focused on the rights of the criminal. I would give the criminal rights—the right to be birched, to be flogged, to be castrated and to be given a damn good hiding. Some people say that corporal punishment undermines an individual's dignity—what about the dignity of the victim? Surely, if the alarming rise in crime tells us anything, it is that many in our society believe that crime pays. Therefore, we must ensure that the punishment is of such a nature that it makes even the most hardened offender think again.

At present, prison—even though it costs the taxpayer £20,000 per prisoner per year—is regarded as a soft option. Giving 20 lashes per prisoner per year may be more appropriate. Too often, the authorities treat criminals with kid gloves. The Strangeways riot was a case in point. It was sickening to see those men sticking two fingers up to the society that they had defaced. The Government and the police should have given them 10 minutes to get off the roof before using marksmen to pick them off one by one. That would have sent clear signal to all the miscreants in our society.

The state must ultimately reserve the right to take a citizen's life. Some argue that capital punishment is never justified as it violates a human's right to life but without the rope, there is no way effectively to distinguish crimes such as theft from crimes such as cold-blooded murder. Criminals should be in no doubt that when they contemplate a murder or participate in acts such as armed robbery, which so often tragically result in death, their own lives are on the line.

I shall describe some of the origins and causes of crime. The problems that we face today result from the breakdown of discipline, whether in the home, at school or the world at large. Too many parents in this country regard their children as an unfortunate by-product of sex. They pay little attention to their upbringing and exhibit negligible control. As a result, the housing estates are

littered with children roaming the streets after dark, and engaging in petty vandalism and theft. Why? Because their parents could not give a damn about where their children are or what they are up to.

It is no good lecturing such people on the need to show more affection to their kids, making them pay fines or even docking their child benefit entitlement—although that would concentrate their mind. The parents of persistent offenders should be put behind bars while their children are temporarily looked after by people who exhibit some responsibility. It is nearly always left to schools to pick up the pieces. It is ludicrous that, when faced with a classroom of hooligans, a teacher cannot resort to corporal punishment or—as in my day—hurl a blackboard duster at the head of an obnoxious student. The result is that the days have gone when you could hear a pin drop in the classroom and we now have a generation that are out of control. What sort of message goes out to the public when a rapist is told by a judge to give the victim £500 for a holiday so that all will be well? The rapist should have his goolies removed.

My friends know my honest view of Europe, but one practice from the Community that I would grasp with open arms is national service. Young people—both men and women—can learn the benefits of discipline, teamwork and deference to authority. The term should be 18 months. People say that we cannot afford it, but I say that we cannot afford not to have it. People may talk about a peace dividend, but events around the world show us that we must be on our guard more than ever before. We cannot forget the schemes that incorporate community work—what young people really need to be told is to "get some in".

As well as being concerned about the breakdown of discipline and respect for authority in our society, I am also deeply worried about the extent of television and cinema violence. In a society where many children lack guidance, the violence depicted in the visual media has a disturbing effect. Where else do youngsters get the idea of maiming toddlers? Where do youths get the idea that wielding a gun or knife is glamorous? Too often, violence is depicted without a moral standpoint or, worse still, the homicidal maniac is idolised. Children must be protected from such garbage. Again, that involves the participation of parents, who too often prefer to be down at the pub.

What of the Labour party's law and order policy? What a joke it is. The malaise in our society that has contributed to the rise of lawlessness has largely been as a result of the ideology of the Labour party. That party has paid more attention to rehabilitating or excusing the offender than punishing him. The Labour party is pathetic.

Since 1979, the Labour party has fought against every major piece of legislation designed to combat crime. Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), go up and down the country moralising and talking hypocritical nonsense. They opposed the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which strengthened and clarified police powers in criminal investigations, and the Public Order Act 1986, which provides the police with stronger powers to deal with street disorder.

12.15 pm

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans). My constituents live on the front line of the war against crime, and my constituents and I do not need lectures from Conservative Members about how frightening and demoralising it is to live in an area of high crime rates. My constituents and I want people accused of crime to be pursued just as ferociously as Conservative Members say that they do. We want such people—including the police, when they are accused of crime—to be pursued with the full rigour of the law and, where appropriate, prosecuted.

On Tuesday the Home Secretary made a statement about the Government's plans for responding to juvenile crime. On the same day four people—Rennie Kingsley, Ida Oderinde, Dennis Tulloch and Everard Brown—had their convictions quashed by the Court of Appeal, headed by the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Lane, because the evidence in their cases from police officers at Stoke Newington police station was no longer reliable. Rennie Kingsley had already served two months of a four-month prison sentence. Ida Oderinde had served 13 months of a four-year prison sentence. Dennis Tulloch had served one year of a four-year sentence. Everard Brown was sentenced for six years in 1991. All those people had had drugs planted on them by police officers, four were accused of possession, and three with the intent to supply.

All the police officers involved are on suspension and under investigation because of those allegations, and a host of others. As long ago as April 1991, Scotland Yard set up Operation Jackpot to investigate allegations of corruption at Stoke Newington police station. They were not idle allegations, or only one or two allegations, but a series of serious allegations that has taken nearly three years to investigate. The investigation is not yet complete. An interim report was issued on 20 November 1991—the full report is still not available. But according to the information released to date, there is sufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations. The operation was expected to end last summer, but was prolonged.

A number of officers have been accused of planting drugs, theft and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. To date, 12 officers have been named: PC Mark Carroll has been mentioned in 10 cases; PC Terence Chitty has been mentioned in 12 cases; PC Bruce Galbraith has been mentioned in five cases; DC Bernard Gillan has been mentioned in six cases; DC Paul Goscombe has been mentioned in five cases; PC Christopher Hart has been mentioned in 12 cases; DS Graham Leblond has been mentioned in one case; DC Roy Lewandowski has been mentioned in four cases; DC Barry Lyons has been mentioned in eight cases; DC Peter McCulloch has been mentioned in seven cases; DC Ronald Palumbo has been mentioned in 14 cases; DS Robert Watton has been mentioned in four cases.

The most frightening aspect of the investigations is the number of police officers who have been accused of participating in organised crime. It has been alleged that drugs discovered in raids have been returned to the community by bent policemen who have set up individuals to sell drugs on their behalf in return for a cut of the profits.

Eight of the officers have been transferred from Stoke Newington. One, DC Roy Lewandowski, was convicted of

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theft and is in prison. PC Bruce Galbraith, DC Barry Lyons and DC Ronald Palumbo have been suspended. The number of officers implicated suggests that this is not a case of one or two bad apples in the barrel. It is difficult to believe that senior officers were not aware of what was going on or that they did not condone it. Because these allegations are so serious and because a serious investigation has been going on for so long, I call on the Home Secretary to waive the excuse of jurisdiction and to look into the matter.

When one raises these issues with the local police they get understandably defensive. The police in areas such as Stoke Newington do not have an easy task; it is easy for them to slip into a siege mentality. But it is wrong of them to imply, as they consistently do when they talk on or off the record about this subject, that the allegations are all invented by bent officers and criminal members of the public. The Government have a responsibility to take the situation at Stoke Newington seriously and I ask them to make the following commitments: first, to make Detective Superintendent Russell's report available to the Royal Commission on criminal justice as soon as it is ready. Secondly, I ask them to introduce a directive on police investigations to ensure that they do not take longer than necessary. I need not remind the Minister of the case of ex parte Cherry. In that case, police officers escaped prosecution because the investigations had taken so long.

I want figures, division by division, of the numbers of police officers who have been the subject of complaints. How many officers have been cautioned, suspended or convicted in relation to these complaints? I want the Government to allow the Crown prosecution service to take a more active role by assuming responsibility for investigating allegations of police misconduct. The system of the police investigating themselves commands no confidence among the public. It is time the police were subjected to genuinely independent external investigations.

Finally, I ask the Home Secretary to consider reviewing the police complaints system and to replace the current criminal standard of proof required with the civil standard of proof, based on the balance of probabilities. I have written to the Home Secretary about these matters, but unfortunately not yet had a reply.

It is not easy to raise matters of police wrongdoing or corruption in the House. I am sure that my hon. Friends on the Opposition Front Bench would far rather I did not. It is easy for people to accuse us of being anti-police or of undermining confidence in the police. I am the first to say that there are dedicated police officers at Stoke Newington police station, working in difficult circumstances, but the fact is that over the past decade the police have undermined confidence in themselves in cases such as the Birmingham Six and the Tottenham Three. There cannot be effective action against crime in our inner cities unless the police command the absolute support of the community.

We have an appalling drug problem in Stoke Newington. My constituents and I want a real war against drugs there. We want the drug dealers taken off the streets. When I leave my home in the summer and push my baby along in the pushchair down to Dalston junction, I pass crack dealers in the street. We want the clubs where drug deals are struck to be closed down; likewise the flats on estates where drugs are retailed. We want these crack dens cleaned up; we want a war against drugs in Hackney. It is a matter of great concern to me that the Metropolitan police still have no overall strategy on drugs.

If we mention serious allegations against the police, Conservative Members are quick to say that we are anti-police, but unless these allegations are cleared up and the police regain the confidence of the community, they will be unable to act against the serious problems in our midst. The allegations against the police in Stoke Newington are the most serious allegations of police corruption for many years. They have hung like a cloud over Stoke Newington police station. As a resident and representative of the area, I want a fresh start there. I want the Home Secretary to answer my letter and the points that I have made. I want to know which policemen are guilty and which are not. We want the Stoke Newington police station to be cleaned up and we want a fresh start, with genuine co-operation between police and community, so that we can attack the drug dealers, the drug abuse and the drug peddling that are poisoning our community.

12.24 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I must declare two interests. First, I am parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales. Secondly, I have just become president of the Uxbridge victim support scheme.

The Minister has asked for the views of hon. Members on the operation of sections 18 and 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. In the 10 minutes available to me, I will try to give mine.

First, there is the section of the 1991 Act that deals with previous offences. As the House knows, critics of that section have complained that it prevents sentencing authorities from taking an offender's previous criminal record into account. I am advised that the Act merely reflects established legal practice. The Court of Appeal has consistently ruled that previous convictions do not of themselves make the offence more serious, and it is said to be quite wrong that an offender should be punished twice for the same offence.

I also understand that section 29(2) of the Act makes it clear that where aggravating factors are disclosed by the circumstances of previous offences, a court may take them into account. For instance, if an offender commits a series of six burglaries by night, the fact that they took place by night would not be an aggravating factor. But if in each case the victim were an elderly widow, there would be an aggravating factor—consistent selection of vulnerable victims.

I believe that the Court of Appeal's guidance has made it clear that courts should continue to receive information on previous convictions. The current dissatisfaction, it is said, stems from procedures that existed before the Act was introduced. That is the position taken by those who defend this section of the 1991 Act.

I should like to tell the House about the concern being expressed to me by some members of the Police Federation, and how it sees section 29(2) affecting sentences imposed by the courts in respect of both adult and juvenile offenders. I will preface my remarks by saying that many police officers see the 1991 Act as having, as one of its principal aims, the lowering of the prison population.

Let me offer the House some illustrations of recent cases. I shall not give the names of those who were convicted or the names of the courts.

Case No. 1 concerns a man who had a number of convictions for assault. He was charged with fracturing a man's jaw and perforating his eardrum and with assaulting two females with a sledgehammer. He was convicted and sentenced to a community service order of 80 hours, a probation order for 12 months and a conditional discharge for 12 months for unlawful wounding and assaults occasioning actual bodily harm.

In case No. 2 a person with serious convictions for drug offences, including convictions on five counts for supplying heroin for which he received three years' imprisonment, was arrested in possession of a substantial quantity of cannabis which he admitted he would supply to other persons. He was fined just £250. On the day following his arrest, he was arrested for a public order offence at a rave party. It appears likely that the cannabis was destined for that event.

The third case involves two men who were known to be a professional team of burglars. They were arrested following four house burglaries. Both had numerous previous convictions and one had just been released from a four-year term of imprisonment for burglary offences. They received a 75-hour community service order.

Case No. 4 is of a man arrested for burglary offences, handling stolen property and taking a conveyance. He jumped bail and when he was finally caught and convicted he was placed on probation for one year. He had eight previous convictions.

My final example is of a man arrested for shoplifting who had no fewer than 67 previous convictions. The magistrate ordered him to pay £17·43 and no other penalty whatever was imposed. I shall not take up the House's time by giving more examples. The cases that I have quoted show that there is little deterrent in the law as it stands and that the judicial system is failing to protect the public by putting burglars where they belong—in prison.

Section 18 of the Criminal Justice Act deals with unit fines. It came into effect in October last year and introduced to magistrates courts a new system of income-related fines. Those fines have two components. Magistrates assess the gravity of the offence and assign to it the appropriate number of units. Some of the fines are lower than those that would be imposed on a person with a fixed penalty ticket for offences of speeding or parking on a yellow line. Where is the justice, where is the deterrent?

The unit fine system also seems open to abuse and is seen by many people as unfair and unjust. It is thought that many defendants do not tell the truth about their earnings. What formal checks are carried out on the earnings of a defendant? I understand that there are few such checks.

I shall now deal with a matter of concern to the Police Federation and the Police Superintendents' Association and all those who are interested in the ability of the police to defend themselves against the shocking number of serious assaults which they are suffering while going about their duty protecting us, the citizens.

As the House knows, I have consistently campaigned for the introduction of the side-handled baton, which the police want because it has a longer reach. Its handle enables a police officer to defend himself or herself from assault by a person who may, for example, be wielding an iron bar. It can be swivelled on the handle, and that is very useful for knocking a knife or perhaps a gun from the hand of an assailant.

I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced this week in answer to a question from me that he has authorised trials in the Metropolitan police of an expandable baton and a telescopic baton. The expandable one extends at a flick of the wrist while a telescopic baton may be compared rather easily with a telescopic umbrella. In effect, the telescopic baton is illegal.

Those batons do not have a handle and the Home Secretary has said that he wants to examine their wounding potential. He also thinks that police officers should not carry a baton external to their uniforms, but that they should be carried covertly in a truncheon pocket. The reason for that is that my right hon. and learned Friend is anxious not to change the traditional image of the British bobby, the officer whom a small child, a juvenile or an old lady may approach without fear.

My right hon. and learned Friend does not want to see police officers looking like a walking armoury. Perhaps he has in mind the police officers that we sometimes see in television films of life in the United States, with jangling handcuffs, pistols and long batons being worn on their uniforms. I accept all that, but I do not believe that the British would regard police officers as walking armouries if they had a side-handled baton worn externally to their uniform. Such batons are used in many countries in the continent of Europe and I believe that they should be introduced in the United Kingdom.

12.35 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Having spent a great deal of my life working with criminals, including extremely serious offenders, I find it frustrating to have to confine my remarks to 10 minutes. It is not possible to take up all the arguments in such a short time.

I am in a position to remind the Minister that some years ago I warned the Government—this was before the first prison riot—that we would have riots in our prisons. I warned the Government also that we would have increasing crime in the United Kingdom, especially violent crime. I suggest to the Minister—I think that he is beginning to listen, not least because of the impact that the debate on crime is having on the Conservative party, which is beginning to be frightened by it—that he reads the speeches that I made in the House in 1985 and 1986. He will find that I spent much of my time talking about crime prevention. I cannot go through them all now.

I merely say that if we continue with the policies that have been implemented over recent years, which undermine the structure of both the family and the community, crime—especially violent crime—will continue to increase. I have said many times that we can deal with crime by physical and structural methods, such as using the concierge system in high-rise flats and taking families with young children out of those flats. The children have to stay inside or they play outside unsupervised, which means that they can get into crime or become the victims of crime.

I have drawn attention to the need for stronger locks on doors and windows. Various keep-safe organisations have helped. Unfortunately, the Minister mocked the importance of incorporating crime prevention in local

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authorities' planning policies. The key to good crime prevention is close liaison between a local authority and the police. That is why police committees and local authorities are crucial, and why planning policy, as well as housing, education and youth facilities, is so important. There is a combination of critical factors, and it is in that area that the Government have failed most dramatically. I have some hope that they are beginning to reverse their policies.

The Government are talking about millions of pounds being spent on new lock-up facilities, when they spend only £2 million or £3 million on alcohol or drug abuse prevention measures. Not long ago, the film "Grass Arena" was shown on television. It was about one of my clients, with whom I worked for many years. He is the first vagrant alcoholic so far as I know to have written a book about his circumstances. I do not think that I could have got that man off alcohol abuse in the present circumstances, because of the limited facilities that are available.

If someone is on drugs or alcohol, he will have to make many attempts to come off it. It cannot be done in one go. In the 1960s and 1970s, I had the advantage of the availability of various systems through which I could put people. They would fail and break down, as it were, but it was possible to strive and ultimately to succeed.

The talk about tougher sentences is nonsense if we are not catching offenders, and the majority of offenders do not get caught. We cannot flog, shoot or hang offenders if we do not catch them. When juveniles are caught, it is important that punishment quickly follows the crime. A parent will not delay punishing a child for several weeks. In other words, punishment quickly follows the "offence". That cannot be replicated in a legal system, but the closer we get to doing that the more effective will be the punishment. The greater the length of time that elapses before punishment is imposed, the more irrelevant it seems to the young person concerned.

The past few days have seen—not least because of the tragic circumstances of the Jamie Bulger case—an outbreak of moral concern about family structure and morality. If I had spent all my time as a probation officer and in other capacities giving moral lectures to my clients, I would have been totally and utterly ineffective. That is not to say that one's clientele should not be told that their actions were wrong—they should, but moral lectures do not work.

If a child is brought up in a family whose problems are so severe that the messages he or she receives are at best confused and at worst often destructive, or if the child is a member of a peer group that is engaged in criminal or deliquent behaviour, any message given by a teacher, probation officer or social worker will have only a marginal effect. That is why there is much greater emphasis now on working more closely and intensively with offenders.

If the Government want to be more effective, they must devote much more money in other Departments on the first five years of a child's life. Nursery and other provision is critical. It is no use expecting probation officers and others to pick up the pieces when a person reaches 15, 20 or 30 years of age. Nor is it any use—fortunately, only two Conservative Members were stupid enough to do this—calling for birching and similar punishments. The background of almost all violent offenders shows that they had such severe violence inflicted upon them as children that more violence would not work. That is why extreme forms of punishment fail.

One can confidently say that 90 per cent. of violent offenders had violence used against them as children, When we shed tears, rightly, when a child is battered to death or abused in some way, we should remember that the parents who it is said should be hanged, tortured or flogged for their actions were nearly always victims themselves. If we had seen them as children, we would have shed tears for them.

One should not confuse morality with behaviour. We may say, "Yes, certain things are morally wrong," and structure our statements accordingly, but it is infinitely more important to address the behavioural problems that have evolved in a family that is collapsing.

The family is not the classic image of two adults and two children, and it does not follow that such a family is less likely to offend than a one-parent family—which can be very loving and consistent. Consistency is critical in understanding the boundaries of behaviour, for inconsistent messages produce inconsistent behaviour. One youngster told me that his mother clouted him around the ear for lying—apparently, one or two Conservative Members believe that is a good thing, but I do not—and then told him to go downstairs to tell the milkman that she was not in, because she could not afford to pay the bill. That child learned the message that lying is all right in some situations and not in others.

Dishonesty is not related just to class—it can be found among higher income groups. Every Member of Parliament who fills in an expense account ought to be careful about lecturing the rest of the country about moral behaviour. At times, we are all dishonest. What matters is that street crime and burglary in particular impact painfully and dramatically on the individual, whereas the sort of fraud practised at other levels in society does not, to the same degree. That is why the public rightly become more angry and less tolerant about the former.

If we focused on the needs of children, which desperately needs to be done, we could do much to ensure that the next generation do not get into the mess in which the present generation find themselves. I repeat my call not for a Minister for families but for a Minister for children, which might produce the co-ordination across various Government Departments that is necessary not only to deal with the present problem of young offenders but to make them better parents for the future and reduce the level of offending in future generations.

It can be done; it is complicated, but it is not impossible. There are many causes of crime, but the answers are there. Crime will never be entirely eliminated, but, certainly as long as we continue to undermine the structure of society and the function of families—however loose the description "family" may be—the crime rate will continue to increase, and the Government will continue to be embarrassed by it.

12.44 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): First, let me declare two interests, as a former policeman and as the father of a policeman. Secondly, in the interests of brevity, I asociate myself entirely with the remarks of my right hon. Friend

the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), and those of my hon. Friends the Members for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley) and for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby).

The recent tragic death of James Bulger in Liverpool shocked the nation to its core. I believe that people who may not normally spend much time thinking about crime and the criminal justice system—perhaps because those subjects have not impinged on them—felt that James Bulger's death was somehow symptomatic of the growing problem of youth crime. The outcome of that case remains to be seen, but I want to cite two similar tragic incidents that have occurred in my constituency in the past 18 months and which have had the same devastating effect on public opinion.

First, there was a death of Mrs. Barbara Ross in a road accident in Filey. Two other women in the vehicle were severely injured. I have raised the matter in the House before, but it is important to remember that the 16-year-old boy who drove the stolen vehicle that caused the accident, who was sentenced to one year in prison—although he actually served four or five months—was known to the police. He has been arrested several times in the Yorkshire region; Scarborough police had arrested him only two days before that dreadful incident.

The incident provoked outrage among my constituents. Not only did they feel that what was done to the youngster concerned was an insult to Mrs. Ross and her family; more important, they felt that the police and the courts were powerless to do anything about the activities of the small hard core of youngsters who steal cars and commit burglaries.

As you will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and as was reported in the Yorkshire press—PC Ken Moss recently suffered horrendous injuries in my constituency, between Malton and York. As a result of those injuries, he is now permanently blind. The symptoms were the same as in the previous case: the youngsters responsible were well known to police and had been arrested many times before for stealing motor vehicles and driving them dangerously.

Following the Barbara Ross tragedy, I campaigned even more vigorously for new legislation. Eventually, the Aggravated Vehicle-taking Act 1992 was passed. I do not want to make a party political speech, but it is worth reminding hon. Members that when the Bill was introduced by the then Home Secretary—my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)—he was accused of introducing a panic measure without a purpose. It was because of that measure, however, that the youngster responsible for the PC Moss incident pleaded guilty to an offence under the Act and was sentenced to two years in prison—the maximum sentence. Without the legislation, he could have been sentenced to a maximum of six months.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge is well acquainted with that case. He will know that there was considerable disquiet in the police force—let alone the public—about the fact that the sentence for blinding a policeman was only two years. Without the legislation, of course, a much shorter sentence could have been imposed. The case provides a timely reminder in the context of the Home Secretary's statement earlier in the week. It is not a panic measure, but a response to a situation that has caused considerable alarm and concern throughout the criminal justice system.

The House will be aware that the Home Affairs Select Committee is investigating the problem of juvenile crime in some depth. I recommend that hon. Members read the bound volume of written evidence that has been submitted and the volumes of oral evidence that is being taken upstairs. It is required reading for anyone who wants to consider the problem of juvenile crime.

There is overwhelming support in the police service for something to be done about juvenile crime. In evidence to the Committee, Chief Constable Hoddinott rightly referred to a gaping hole in the current provision for juveniles in the 12 to 15-year-old age group.

The Committee heard this week the reaction of other agencies that do not agree with the proposal to return to some form of custodial sentences.

I suggest that the Home Secretary's proposals have not been studied properly. My right hon. and learned Friend announced that five criteria will have to be satisfied before one of the new sentences can be passed on 12 to 15-year-olds. First, they will have to have been convicted of three imprisonable offences. Secondly, it will have to be shown that they were unwilling or unable to comply with the requirements of supervision in the community while on remand or under sentence. Next, the court—this is a crucial ingredient—must be satisfied that such an order was necessary to protect the public from further offending.

In that respect, the proposal would seem to be entirely within the spirit of the Criminal Justice Act, which places an obligation on courts, when passing a custodial sentence, to show the need to protect the public from an offender, not just the general objective test of setting an example. A place in a suitable facility must be available, and the court must take account of a pre-sentence report.

From that, we can conclude that the new punishment will have a limited application. The majority of juveniles will be dealt with as they are now. That is right, because there is overwhelming acceptance among all the criminal justice agencies that, for the vast majority of youngsters, the first or second caution is effective, and that for many more, community sentencing is equally effective. We are trying to deal with a small hard core of offenders who appear to think that they can be above the law and can cock a snook at authority. The police experience great frustration in trying to deal with them. Such offenders are arrested daily for similar offences, but no solution is found.

Despite the voluntary agencies' reaction to the Home Secretary's announcement, I took encouragement from the written evidence that we received from Barnardos, which said:

> "For a small minority of young people there is need for secure accommodation with a regime that promotes treatment and personal growth."

No doubt we could argue that other quotations would suggest a different view, but it is accepted that something needs to be done. The nature of the institution is crucial, and we must ensure proper training and proper treatment.

The facilities that have been suggested would be adequate. We must be careful not to mix criminals and social care cases, and we need new guidance for control regimes. The existing powers of the courts to sentence 16 and 17-year-olds also need to be reviewed. Not enough use is being made of the powers available under the Children Act 1989 and the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to protect youngsters from themselves.

No civilised society in the history of mankind has ever developed the ultimate criminal justice regime to deal effectively with delinquent juveniles. Our system is considerably better than many people would acknowledge,

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but there is a gap to be filled by finding a more appropriate solution for the small number who are beyond control. If we keep the essential ingredients of containment, punishment and education, we shall succeed.

12.55 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this extremely important debate.

Ten days ago, I had the pleasure of helping to open a new initiative by Hornsey police, my local divisional force. It was a crime prevention shop in a busy part of Muswell Hill in my constituency, containing displays on various aspects of crime prevention. Police officers will be on hand for two weeks to give advice to members of the public who are understandably worried about rising crime and the protection of their families and property.

I welcome the initiative wholeheartedly and was especially pleased that Hornsey police have taken on board a range of issues, including domestic violence. Last year's report by Victim Support on domestic violence recommended that

"any substantial crime prevention initiatives should include domestic violence".

I hope that other forces will emulate Hornsey's forward-looking approach.

As has already been said, Members of Parliament with London constituencies were extremely pleased to read the recent remarks of the new Metropolitan police Commissioner, Paul Condon. He made it clear at a recent conference that he has forward-looking policies. I and other London Members of Parliament will be watching his actions very closely to see how he implements his proposals to deal with racist attacks in the capital, violence against women and the very high rates of burglary. I am sure that my colleagues and I will be only too happy to assist him in any way we can to make our capital a safer place. But the tackling and prevention of crime cannot be handled by the police alone. The Home Office report "Safer Communities: The Local Delivery of Crime Prevention through the Partnership Approach", produced by a committee chaired by James Morgan, was widely acclaimed in August 1991. It recommended a partnership approach with local authorities and others. Such an approach makes a great deal of sense.

In the introduction to the report, James Morgan said:

"investing in crime prevention and safer communities is potentially an unparalleled way of improving the quality of life in many areas: it is also potentially one of the most cost-effective things it is possible to do."

Even the Home Office welcomed the report, after several hon. Members, including myself, tabled numerous parliamentary questions about it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms. Jackson) finally got an answer from the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). He said:

"I welcome the report's endorsement of the partnership approach to crime prevention, which is now the cornerstone of the Government's policy."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1991; Vol. 216, c. *220*.]

We were delighted, because it appeared that the Government had seen sense and taken to heart what the Labour party was saying about crime prevention.

I was one of those who rushed to the Library to read a copy of the Home Office's response to the Morgan report. Unfortunately, I was extremely disappointed, as were the police officers, local authorities and others who had contributed to it. The Government's response does not wholeheartedly endorse even one of the recommendations. On each recommendation, they take a "Yes Minister-ish" tone and say, "Yes, the Government accept that but, no, it would not be appropriate at the moment." On one important aspect, community safety impact statements to be produced for all new legislation and major policy initiatives, we are told:

"such a commitment is likely to demand resources disproportionate to any results realised".

That is simply not good enough. For far too long, crime prevention—which is so important to the understanding of and the way forward in tackling crime—has been the poor relation in the debate on crime.

Despite the Government's negative response, many people agree—as the report recognised—that local authorities have a vital role to play in reducing crime. Proper street lighting, concierge systems in local authority housing, youth clubs and services for young people and properly trained and full-time park-keepers can make a huge difference to the feel of an area and the life of its residents.

In my constituency, council architects and the local police have worked together to install complete security systems in some council blocks, including concierge staff on duty for 16 hours a day and a video-recording system to deter vandals and burglars. The effect of that on people's lives is of immeasurable importance.

Although we have spoken about rising crime, an important aspect is the fear of crime, which imprisons many people, especially elderly people, in their homes. They are frightened to go out on the streets at night. How many hon. Members have ever spoken to a pensioners' meeting in the evening? Of course, we do not, because pensioners are frightened to come out at night. Co-operation between local authorities and the police is absolutely essential.

In my area, Chief Superintendent Trevor Harvey of the Hornsey police issued an imaginative invitation to local councillors to go out on the beat with their local officers, and many councillors have taken up that invitation, as I have. It is a valuable exercise in seeing the challenges and difficulties which the police in London encounter.

Unfortunately, in London, we do not have the benefit of a local police authority to aid us in these tasks. The Home Secretary is the police authority in London. That is why Londoners, including police officers and those at a senior level in the Metropolitan police force, are enthusiastic about there being a new form of police authority in London. They know that such an authority will help them in their fight against crime and their desire to provide a better standard of policing in London and a better service for local people.

When we examine the Home Secretary's plans for police authorities outside London, they do not fill me and my colleagues, and Conservative Members, with hope for the future. The Conservative-controlled Association of County Councils wrote to all Members of Parliament on 13 January 1993 to say:

"In the Association's view the removal of local accountability for the police could place a dangerous concentration of power in a most sensitive and important aspect of British life within the hands of one Secretary of State

and Government Department. The ACC believes that local government has a genuine and important role to play in what is universally accepted should be a locally-based service."

It is exceedingly difficult to see how removing local accountability can contribute to implementing the partnership approach which the Government claim is now the cornerstone of crime prevention policy.

The reason why we need a multi-agency approach to crime prevention and community safety—as the Morgan report made clear—is that the environment in which we bring up our children and young people, and in which we all live, makes a huge difference.

In my area, great work has been done by the Finsbury Park Action Group to improve Finsbury Park station. My good opinion of that work is shared by my hon. Friends the Members for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott). The group has done a great deal of work to make our local British Rail and the tube station safer. But the downside is that, if the Government's privatisation plans for British Rail go ahead, further destaffing of the station at night will leave women, elderly people and many others in our community understandably too frightened to travel.

The Archbishop of York was right to point to the link between the rise in crime, the availability through unemployment of more people with nothing better to do than commit crime and the competitive materialism engendered by years of Conservative government——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Time is up.

Before I call the next speaker, I draw it to the attention of hon. Members that the replies are to commence at 1.50 pm. No fewer than seven hon. Members hope to catch my eye in the 45 minutes that remain. With the co-operation of all hon. Members, they may be able to do so.

1.5 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Although the rule technically no longer applies, I shall restrict myself to 10 minutes and possibly do even better.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the debate, which is of great importance to my constituents in Eastbourne. Like the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), I have many elderly constituents who are afraid to go out or open their doors at night. We all know that the fear of crime often runs ahead of the statistics.

We have had a recent surge of burglaries in the Eastbourne area. That has been a major problem, especially in the Roselands area of the town. But I am delighted to say that the local police, headed by Superintendent Bentham have had some major recent successes in catching and charging the burglars.

Crime is an important but complex issue, as my hon. Friend the Minister rightly said. But it seems to attract the easy answer merchants who are in considerable supply on the Opposition Benches. There is no better example than the Liberal Democrats both locally and nationally. I am surprised to see that no Liberal Democrat Members are present in the Chamber now.

Labour Members, especially the Front-Bench spokesmen, always appear self-conscious when we discuss law and order and crime and punishment. My conviction is that the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbot) is more the authentic voice of the Labour party on law and order. It is anti-police, anti-authority and anti-family.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) made an excellent point when he said that the Labour party was the Johnny-come-lately to the importance of law and order. I need only quote the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) in 1988 when she was the junior Front-Bench spokesman for the Labour party on law and order. She is now the Labour spokesman on education. She said:

> "We cannot see the merit in giving the Attorney-General the power to send a case to the Court of Appeal, to consider a case that he considers to be unduly lenient. That would mean subjecting the offender to a form of double jeopardy". —[*Official Report*, 18 January 1988; Vol. 125, c. 751.]

Yet I imagine that Opposition Members, including the hon. Member for Dewsbury, might well hypocritically welcome the decision made the other day to refer to the Court of Appeal under that Conservative provision, the disgraceful sentence to which my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) referred in his characteristic speech, of £500 and a supervision order on a 15-year-old rapist. That was an absolute disgrace. It was rightly condemned by my hon. Friend.

The answer to crime is not simply more police. In Sussex we have been fortunate in the past seven successive years to see a growth in real terms. The effective budget increase in that period is equivalent to an extra 21 per cent. over and above inflation. We have taken on 109 extra police officers, excluding those required for Gatwick airport. I and my hon. Friends who represent the county will continue to press for more police, but one could put a policeman on every street corner in my constituency and there would still be a major problem with disorder and lack of respect for the law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) voiced an important argument about police equipment. If the police feel that they need equipment such as the side-handled baton, they should have it, and I have made representations on the subject to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. We understand that the wounding power of that baton is about nine times greater than that of the somewhat old-fashioned truncheon which is carried by our police officers.

Recently there have been examples of police officers —especially policewomen—being unable to fend of vicious attacks by thugs, who are often armed with knives or other weapons. It is high time that the police had that sort of equipment if they feel the need for it, and I join my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge in welcoming the trials of new telescopic batons in the Metropolitan police area.

We know that over one half of all offenders are under 21, and we have heard much useful comment in the debate about the need for discipline and respect for the law. Those things happen not by accident, but because such ideas are inculcated in children at an early age. We have also heard that 87 per cent. of young people cautioned are not convicted again within the following two years.

I enthusiastically welcome, as will my constituents, the Home Secretary's proposals to deal with the small, hard core of persistent young offenders between the ages of 12 and 15. Hon. Members may have seen the sorry story of one young man on television the other day. During the

[Mr. Nigel Waterson]

lunch hour, while waiting for one of his cases to come up in the magistrates court, he committed another offence, to keep his hand in, as it were.

Of course it is right to say that schools have a major role to play. Research at Cambridge university shows that 48 per cent. of juvenile offenders have been truants at school. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has rightly said more than once that so often the problems start with truancy, and young children begin on the long road to becoming professional criminals in later life. Parents must also have a major role to play, by bringing their children up in the right way so that they know the difference between right and wrong.

Corporal punishment has been mentioned by several Conservative Members and opposed with some vigour by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley). My hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley and for Welwyn Hatfield both have a point. In dealing with children and young offenders, we have got to the stage where we have tried all the clever answers and ideas produced by the experts. Is it not time to reconsider corporal punishment? I seem to remember that the mere existence of it as a possibility and a deterrent seemed to bring about magical transformations in the behaviour of some of my fellow pupils. We should not merely confine it to schools, however, but make it part of the criminal justice system.

Considerable research in America suggests that many offenders do not see the connection between the offence and the punishment if there is a long delay between the two, so the punishment is therefore a waste of everyone's time and effort. If we could evolve a system under which, in certain cases, young offenders were subject to brisk corporal punishment within a short time of committing an offence—almost on a summary basis—they would also not suffer from a criminal record. *[Laughter.]* Opposition Members may laugh, but until I hear them coming up with some concrete solutions to the problems I am inclined to think that the Conservative side of the House has shown the most thoughtful approach to the debate.

If that brisk, summary corporal punishment did not include any criminal record or incarceration, which might blight a young person's career prospects, it would represent a genuine short, sharp shock. It need not have any long-term effect on a child or young offender and might produce the right result.

This serious subject must be viewed seriously. The recent superficial conversion of the Opposition to the cause of law and order and policing is precisely as I have described it. It is Conservative Members and Ministers who know about the subject. We are prepared to treat it as a complex issue and to act accordingly.

1.15 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I am glad to note that the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) is in his usual place. I always listen with something approaching disbelief to his cerebral contributions, particularly on law and order. As I listened to the hon. Gentleman I realised that he is one of those who makes Ayatollah Khomeini seem like one of the bleeding heart liberals of whom the hon. Gentleman accuses our country of having.

I thought of some of the other punishments that the hon. Gentleman did not touch upon that appertain around the world.

Mr. David Evans: I did not have the time.

Mr. Banks: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman could have taken us on a tour. I wonder what he thinks about the punishment of being stoned to death for adultery. If that punishment were to be applied there would be an awful lot of by-elections for this House very quickly.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) did my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) less than justice by saying that she gave an anti-police speech. The hon. Gentleman could not have listened, because she made it quite clear that in her constituency they want effective policing. They want something to be done about drugs on the streets of Hackney. My hon. Friend paid tribute to the honest policemen and women of Stoke Newington, but she said that the trust between people and police is undermined if there are bent coppers in that area. In our discussions with Sir Peter Imbert, he made it clear that he would not tolerate that in Stoke Newington or elsewhere. He endorsed the views that my hon. Friend expressed.

The hon. Member for Eastbourne and his hon. Friends should note that Opposition Members do not need any lectures about the victims of crime. I come from the east end of London, where people are such victims. It is a much harsher environment than that of Eastbourne, even though crime is on the increase there.

My constituency house in Forest Gate looks a bit like Stalag Luft III, given the amount of barricading that has had to go up around the place. It is just as well that I did that, because my neighbours are broken into regularly. We in the east end understand what it is like to live in a community where muggings, rapes, racist attacks, burglaries, car crimes and drug abuse are the daily penalties paid by many of our citizens. We do not need any lectures on policing, victims or crime prevention. We want the police to be effective. Opposition Members have always demanded that, because the people we represent suffer the most, not the Tories in the leafy shires.

We want a two-tier approach to crime. We want action now against those who perpetrate crime on our streets in London and elsewhere. We want more policemen on the beat. That is part of the answer, because it gives some confidence to people when they see uniformed officers on the beat. However, as has already been said, it does not help safety and crime prevention when British Rail destaffs its stations in the east end and elsewhere. It does not help when uniformed staff are removed from the platforms or the trains on the London underground, another area where crime is still rampant, although recent improvements have been made.

When wrong-doers are caught, we expect appropriate punishment to be imposed on them by magistrates and others. We accept, of course, that something must be done about the symptoms of crime. I am not being party political, because Labour and Tory Members who represent some of the inner-London constituencies know what it is all about. We need something done to address the symptoms of crime, but we also need to address the causes.

The Opposition have said—we stand by it and repeat it time and again—that there is no justification for most

crimes. However, there are reasons behind criminal activity that are many and varied, and should not be ignored. Reasons are not excuses, but they still have to be addressed as reasons. It is facile and politically dishonest to disregard the causes of crime.

There is no need for the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield or anyone else to take my word, but perhaps they will take the word of Lord Whitelaw. When he was the Opposition spokesman in 1978 he said:

"if boys and girls do not obtain jobs when they leave school, they fear that society has no need for them. If they feel that, they do not see any reason why they should take part in that society and comply with its rules."

When Lord Whitelaw was reminded of those words just a day or so ago he said:

"I simply have to admit that they are as true today, with greater force, than they were then. I have never changed that view".

Lord Whitelaw can see the link between cause and symptom.

I remember the previous Prime Minister, Baroness Thatcher, saying that every Prime Minister should have a Willy. The present Prime Minister still has his Willy—I only hope that he has the balls to carry out what Willy is saying today and when he repeats what he said in 1978.

In an interview with David Frost, the Archbishop of York said that Tory values were partly to blame for criminality. He said:

"The Government, with its strong emphasis on competitive success, feeds the notion that in our society we are against each other."

That was what the lesson of the 1980s was all about. It is easy to blame the 1960s. In their arrogance, Ministers today always blame somebody else for everything that goes wrong in society, but are ready to give a press release or a press conference to claim the credit for everything that they do that goes right—not much these days.

My last quote on the issue of cause and effect comes from the Metropolitan police. In its evidence to the Sheehy inquiry on police responsibilities and rewards, the Metropolitan police—not me—state:

"Any substantial decline in the UK economy could produce a "polarisation" in demands on the police service —the creation of an "underclass" at one end of the social scale and the willingness of more affluent consumers to pay for their own security and private policing at the other. The impact of the current recession has been hardest in the South. There may be severe implications for policing . . .The compelling link between crime and economic factors may be further evident in future demands for policing . . . continued high levels of unemployment in the future could possibly lead to extraordinary demands upon police time for public order duties."

Those were not the ravings of a bleeding-heart liberal who would be readily condemned by the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield or of the do-gooders at whom he is always sneering. I much prefer do-gooders to do-badders. I have quoted the words of police officers at the sharp end of what is happening in London. Will Ministers ignore those words and say that they have nothing to do with crime? That would be evidence of the Government's arrogance and their opinion that only they know best.

I wish that I were as certain of one thing as the Government seem to be of everything. The Government reject and throw to one side the evidence of people who are involved in crime prevention and who suffer from the problems of crime in our capital city and elsewhere. Many factors—which are not excuses—lead to crime. We live in a something-for-nothing society in which public property and public service are sneered at and devalued by the Government who always elevate private property and private provision to the highest level. We live in a society in which images of violence, decadence and sexual exploitation bombard us all day through television, newspapers, video games and films.

In the *Daily Star* Sir Anthony Hopkins said that he does not intend to make another film like "The Silence of the Lambs". There will be no "Silence of the Lambs II", because Hopkins is worried about how images of violence influence the behaviour of young people. I also notice that Stanley Kubrick, who made "A Clockwork Orange", became so alarmed by the effect that it was having on younger people that he banned the film from being shown. So there are many factors involved in crime. We must look at them all objectively and realise that we all share a common interest and a common purpose in trying to deal with them.

Unemployment, poverty, homelessness—these all play their part. Young people who have no stake in society and no hope cannot be expected to share the values of well-fed, well-housed people in well-paid jobs—such as Members of Parliament and lawyers. How can we talk about these people sharing our values when they share none of the benefits that we enjoy in this House and in our middle-class occupations? The Government cannot dismiss all this as irrelevant.

In London we are taking an approach to dealing with crime based on four key principles; first, obtaining a proper analysis and understanding of the causes, incidence and consequences of crime; secondly, providing adequate resources devoted to effective responses and solutions; thirdly, establishing a partnership between the various agencies involved and the public; and, lastly, ensuring that these agencies are accountable to Londoners. We want a police authority for London, not because we want to call the shots on the day-to-day operations of the Metropolitan police. At senior level, the Metropolitan police know that they can only police London well with the trust and confidence of Londoners, with the latter sharing in decision making and the allocation of resources.

We do not want to have to pay for national responsibilities in the form of the Metropolitan police duties that result in charges on local people—diplomatic protection, royal family protection, and so on, cost Londoners an extra £20 million a year. These are national responsibilities and they should not fall on the London taxpayer.

In parts of London such as the east end we know what crime is all about. We do not need lectures. We want understanding and help; we want co-operation from the Government. As long as the Government are prepared to offer us these things, they will have our unreserved support.

1.27 pm

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): I listened with great interest to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). In his usual way he forcefully and sincerely made the point that social deprivation is a key factor in crime. He also rightly said that many factors are at work; in some instances, social deprivation may be one of them. We should not, however, run away with the idea that social deprivation or a disparity between people's means are necessarily a cause of crime.

[Mr. Stephen Day]

When Conservative Members say that those who make statements such as the hon. Member for Newham, North-West made are making excuses, we mean that sincerely, too. They may not intend what they say to appear to be an excuse, but it is often taken as one. Many of these persistent offenders commit acts of violence that are not economically related—they stand to gain nothing from them. We are talking about sheer violence, and there is no excuse and no human reason why people should commit it.

I have still not heard an adequate explanation in the debate of why, in the 1930s, when there was grinding poverty, there was no outbreak of lawlessness. That is a significant fact and we have to balance it against other arguments that we have heard in the House.

There are no easy answers. It is not purely a party political issue; nor should it be. There is such concern in society that we all need seriously to address and analyse the matter. We must seriously consider the views of every hon. Member.

The country will have welcomed the recent statement by the Home Secretary on persistent juvenile offenders. Will the proposals allow the police to hold a persistent juvenile offender overnight until he can appear in court next morning? If they do, I must have missed that essential point and I should like clarification.

In the Stockport borough, offenders under the age of 15 must be handed over to the social services. I think that most hon. Members know that, but it bears repetition. The borough has no accommodation for persistent offenders. When will the House know where the cost of that provision in Stockport and elsewhere will fall? If the Minister cannot tell the House about that, perhaps he would ask the Home Secretary to address the matter. It is essential to know how such accommodation will be financed, because that is a key factor in making it work. Will parliamentary time be made available for the Bail (Amendment) Bill which is sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Stephen)? It is essential that the Bill be given such time.

While I welcome the Home Secretary's statement, I am concerned, as are many hon. Members, about the time that it will take for the proposals to be implemented. Such worthy provisions to take persistent offenders out of circulation need to be implemented now. In my constituency, as in many others, burglary and car theft are an ever-present threat. People feel threatened and unsafe. Perhaps the television set in the corner which brings every incident immediately into our living rooms gives people the wrong perspective. However, people feel threatened and for society to work cohesively they must cease to feel that way. It is the Government's duty to bring that about.

There is more to do. The Government are certainly not to blame for the current situation, but their first responsibility is to address the problem, not only to the satisfaction of the House but, more importantly, to the satisfaction of people outside. That is a key factor in ensuring a coherent and workable society.

Many people doubt whether the Government are fully meeting their needs and dispelling their fears. Opposition Members have spoken about the fear of their constituents. That fear applies irrespective of social background. It occurs in my constituency, as I know from speaking to people about their fears and worries. I hope that the Government will not think that that one measure is sufficient to address all the problems faced by our citizens.

People want to be sure that persistent offenders, juvenile or not, will be removed from circulation. We need a new deal on law and order—not just for victims but for potential victims; the people who may never be attacked, thank God, but who think that they might be must be given faith and security. They want to know that previous convictions will again be taken into account. That must be urgently addressed by the Government. People also want to be sure that violent crime of any sort will be severely dealt with.

The Government have done much to ensure that more of a sentence is served, but the majority of my constituents do not understand our conception of that. They think that those who are convicted should serve the full sentence. We have some way to go to meet public aspirations on that score. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear that in mind.

The rule of law should not, as a first priority, take account of the interests of those who have offended. Reform of a character is a worthy and worthwhile aim, but it should not be the first priority of the legal system. First, we must ensure that society is protected from those who are willing to inflict damage to it as a result of behaviour that is entirely unacceptable to the majority of the people. Secondly, we must determine what to do to reform the character of the perpetrator of a crime. The balance has been wrong for too many years. It was wrong long before the Government came to power. The imbalance goes back to the 1950s, and perhaps even further back to the feeling of freedom and elation following this country's success after a terrible time during the second world war. Ministers must give consideration to these matters. If they do not, my constituents and I will be extremely disappointed.

I am not a religious fanatic. Indeed, I am not a regular church attender. I am sure, however, that many have forgotten that evil exists. There are people outside the House who are just plain evil. They will not, they cannot and they never will share our idea of what is right and what is wrong. They are not immoral, they are amoral. They have no understanding of the rights and wrongs that must apply if a society is to work. If we are dealing with people like that, evil must be punished. It is as simple as that. Society cannot function unless it is made clear that society will not tolerate certain forms of behaviour. Society will be unable to function if it is tolerated.

I suspect that we have tolerated for far too long the sort of behaviour that we see outside the House all too often. People are nervous. The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) made an interesting and worthwhile speech——

Mr. David Evans: The hon. Gentleman always does.

Mr. Day: Indeed.

The hon. Gentleman took up various matters that are essential to the argument that I am advancing. If people feel that they are not secure, they will start to take the law into their own hands. That is the greatest danger of all. People must have faith in the institutions that are set up to protect them. The primary responsibility of the Government is to ensure that that faith remains. If people take the law into their own hands, there will be a breakdown of law and order. I suspect that there are parts of the country where decent, honourable citizens feel so

much despair that they are on the verge of turning their backs on the law and acting independently of it. I do not, of course, seek to encourage that. I say to people who take that view that they will contribute to the destruction of society to a much greater extent than those from whom they are trying to protect themselves. The Government must be aware, however, that that is how people are feeling.

I wish that hon. Members and others would stop saying things that can be taken as excuses. There cannot be excuses for raping elderly women or attacking young women. That must stop. I wish that Church leaders would address themselves to the spiritual needs of the nation. Obviously a gulf exists there. Instead of dabbling in politics, and offering half-baked political philosophy to boot, they would do better to look after the nation's spiritual needs. They are better equipped to do so than I am.

People at all levels must participate in that effort. It is up to us all to show that we care about society. If it is to work, we must all contribute. It requires parents to back teachers. It is no use parents demanding discipline in schools and then objecting when their child is disciplined —as so often happens. That attitude must change.

If we want society, all of us must play a role. The Government must give a lead, but, in a free society, they can do nothing unless the public also accept responsibility. I hope that the House and the nation will view recent events in such a way that the suffering of people such as the young child in Bootle will prompt them to acknowledge the scale of the problem and their responsibilities. It seems to me that everyone knows their rights but no one knows their responsibilities.

1.40 pm

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): Members in all parts of the House acknowledge that there is a need to restore confidence in the criminal justice system. The proposals concerning juvenile crime that the Home Secretary announced this week will fail in that. Before entering the House, I practised criminal law as a solicitor in juvenile and magistrates courts. I am also a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee, which—as the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) said—is currently examining the issue of juvenile crime.

The Home Secretary's proposals were ill thought-out, partial and inadequate. Juvenile crime is an enormous and important problem. It is about more than just locking away a hard core of persistent offenders, yet the Home Secretary had nothing to say about tackling the perpetrators of the majority of juvenile crime.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman presented no proposals on the concept of cautioning plus, no statutory framework for cautioning, and no plans to spread best practice on cautioning or to change the Criminal Justice Act 1991 and the restrictions on sentencing that sections 29 and 1(2) of that legislation impose on courts—and which courts and the police have asked to be changed.

Neither did the Home Secretary enter the discussion on reparation orders. He made an inadequate response on the issue of truancy, saying that extra funding would be provided to some authorities but not all. A national, properly funded policy is needed to confront truancy, which right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House identify as important to overcome.

As to bail bandits, in television and radio broadcasts several weeks ago, the Home Secretary expressed anxiety to tackle that problem, but a parliamentary answer that I received this week states that the 65 secure places for remand juveniles promised in 1991 will not be available until the end of 1995.

The Home Secretary failed to present any proposals for speeding up juvenile trials, which could reduce the incidence of offending while on bail. There is to be extra cash to finance the successful bail support scheme that operates in some parts of the country, which has a proven record of preventing offending on bail. Neither was anything said about the Morgan report.

The Home Secretary's proposals do not address the concerns of voters in my constituency—ordinary working people who are feeling the brunt of crime. They tell me weekly that crime is at record levels and that too few police officers are on the beat. The designation of the Home Office as one of the four Departments due for cuts does not inspire me with confidence that the Treasury is prepared to find the funds to mount an effective campaign, and devise an effective policy, to crack down on criminals. The Government do not seem at all willing to tackle the causes of youth crime.

The Conservatives should be strong on law and order, but, according to newspaper editorials and people whom one meets on the streets, it is Labour which is hitting the right note. The public perceive the need for a broad set of policies to crack down not only on offenders, but on the causes of crime. The provision of a few more places for a few juvenile offenders does not represent a policy to reduce crime; it is a temporary expedient, intended to conceal the lack of vision and overall policy.

We cannot expect simply to lock up a 13-year-old persistent offender and throw away the key. We must address the causes of individual offending and reduce the incidence of reoffending when juveniles are released from custody. The vain hope that a harsh sentence will stop crime has been demolished by the Government themselves. In their 1990 White Paper "Crime, Justice and Protecting the Public", the Government examined the "hang 'em and flog 'em" idea of imposing harsh sentences to deter criminals. The section concerned is worth quoting in full. It states:

> "Deterrence is a principle with immediate appeal . . . But much crime is committed on impluse, given the opportunity presented by an open window, or unlocked door, and is committed by offenders who live from moment to moment; their crimes are as impulsive as the rest of their feckless, sad or pathetic lives. It is unrealistic to construct sentencing arrangements on the assumption that most offenders will weigh up the possibilities in advance and base their conduct on rational calculation. Often they do not."

A policy of imposing harsher sentences is inadequate and does not constitute any sort of answer. Custodial sentences are, at best, a temporary solution, protecting the public while the offenders are in custody. There is a wider need to tackle the causes of offending while the offenders are in the institutions involved—and, more important, after their release.

The Labour party believes that we cannot just ask the police and the criminal justice system—both already over burdened—to take all the responsibility for reducing youth crime. Pointing to the social factors that contribute to crime does not reduce individual responsibility. Hon. Members have referred to the Home Secretary's proposals for juvenile offenders: wider policies are needed to tackle

[Mr. Mike O'Brien]

the factors that contribute to offences committed by those aged between 10 and 16—inadequate parenting, social deprivation and poverty, the breakdown of family relationships, the problems of children in care, over-stretched schools and bad housing. In the case of 16 and 17-year-olds, we need to tackle problems such as homelessness, unemployment, little or no independent finance and a lack of support for those who come out of care, as well as the problems of drug and alcohol abuse.

A narrow concentration on the provision of a few more secure places will not tackle the causes of crime. Although more custodial institutions are needed, the Home Secretary's proposals do not address the real problem. He proposed an order similar to the approved school orders; 78 per cent. of offenders with previous records who were sentenced under those orders reoffended within five years. Research done at the time, taking the characteristics of such offenders into account, showed that the chances of their reoffending was 49 per cent. greater as a result of custody in institutions of that kind. Concentrating 40 juvenile offenders on one site reinforces offending attitudes and behaviour. The juvenile has broken family ties, reduced access to proper education, and finds himself thrown in an institution with other offenders.

The Government have repeatedly said that the Criminal Justice Act 1991 has helped to tackle the problems of crime. The Home Affairs Select Committee has heard from the police, the courts, judges and magistrates, who all say that the Act is causing problems. The Government must urgently review sections 29 and 1(2) or the courts will face the problem of not being able to deal with persistent offenders.

1.50 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this important debate and, at once, I declare an interest as a member of the Bar.

Strangely enough, I agree with the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) about the operation of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. I also endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) said about the operation of section 1(2) and section 29. Like my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State earlier this week, my hon. Friend the Minister of State made it clear that the Government will review those sections. It is good that we have a Government who are prepared to listen to these important points, some of which were not foreseen when the House was considering the measure.

It must be said, however, that the Act also did an awful lot of good. I welcome its provisions on exacting and constructive sentences in the community and on offenders having to serve at least half their sentence in prison. I welcome, too, its emphasis on parental responsibility: parents should be responsible for the actions of their children. I welcome its broad philosophy of sentencing: that sentences with the greatest deterrent effect should be reserved for the most serious offences, especially those involving sex and violence, which cause the greatest fear among the public.

I think long and hard about the sentences that are imposed on sexual offenders, but such troubling offences need to be deterred. I welcome the fact that the Government have increased the maximum sentence for indecent assault from two years to 10 years.

It would be wrong to overlook, as we sometimes do, offences involving property, which also are very serious. I welcome what the Minister said about listening to the victims of crime at a police station. It is good that Ministers listen to victims and others who are involved in the criminal justice system such as practitioners, probation officers and police officers. My hon. Friend the Minister may have met victims of house burglaries, which I regard as a particularly serious offence for which a custodial sentence is often necessary. When the occupants of a house are out, burglary is upsetting enough, but it is terrifying when an intruder enters when the occupant is at home, especially if he or she is elderly. The courts need to visit such offences with serious sentences.

I welcome the Government's proposals for juvenile offenders. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) that they deal with only part of the problem, but it is a part which must be addressed, and here I depart from what the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North said, because secure accommodation must be available to deal with persistent young offenders for whom other methods of disposal have been tried but with which they have not complied. It is not fair on the public to leave them at large to continue to commit offences, as they would, or on the offenders to let them continue to become increasingly immersed in a life of crime. Action must be taken to break that link. I welcome the proposals that have been made to deal with such offenders.

I welcome the emphasis in the Home Secretary's statement on the nature of the secure training centres. He said, in effect, that the secure training orders will be different from anything that has ever been provided before. There must be a distinction between that type of custody and the other types available for older offenders. By definition, we are talking about young people who have got into serious trouble, who are, in all probability, beyond parental control and whose education has been disrupted. The emphasis must be on care and education as well as training and supervision. We need an intensive approach which is different from ordinary custodial sentences.

Above all, the sentence must not be viewed merely as the first rung on the ladder of custodial sentences which the young offender ascends. It must make a break from the past for these very unfortunate young people. I welcome the new approach and wish it every success.

I hope that everything will be done to make the sentence as unlike ordinary criminal sentences as possible and that the young people can emerge with new opportunities in the future. I also hope that the sentence is not regarded as a criminal sentence but is forgotten. It should not be subject even to the provisions of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 but should immediately be spent. It is a necessary step which will be greatly welcomed by my constituents.

1.55 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I welcome the debate and the fact that we are at last able to discuss the problem. A disturbing consensus is developing in the newspapers, television programmes and elsewhere that the

only solution to the problem of crime is increased custodial sentences and increased punishment and retribution against offenders.

No hon. Member likes criminals or crime. I represent a constituency in which the level of crime is, unfortunately, quite high and where juvenile offending is very high. In such constituencies, we have nothing to do except try to control and reduce it, but I believe that the causes of crime have to be considered far more seriously than many newspapers and television programmes are considering them.

There is undoubtedly a strong social link between increasing crime, poverty and unemployment and the ethic of a greedy society—perhaps best articulated by Margaret Thatcher when she was Prime Minister—in which it did not matter what one did as long as one became richer in the process and in which it did not matter what enterprise one undertook as long as one made a fast buck. That was the completely amoral society which was promoted in the 1980s. We are now reaping the whirlwind of the meanness, misery and greed of the Thatcher years. It is time that someone said that and that some people finally understood it.

I cite examples of the way in which crime has risen in London as a whole. This year, for the first time, there are likely to be 1 million crimes recorded in Greater London. There are only about 5 million people in Greater London so that means that there is one crime per five people in the capital. Police numbers have been increased, but there has been a persistent reduction in the rates of arrest. I cannot give the figures for subsequent prosecutions, but I know that the level of reported crime is way below what actually happens.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), who represents the constituency next to mine, made several pertinent points about the under-reporting of sexual offences and of crimes against the person and the gross under-reporting of racist offences and attacks.

We must begin to consider some of the social causes of crime. They cover a wide range of issues, not only the images of a greedy society which are fed to young people throughout their lives. Children without access to a nursery place, who are stuck in front of a television for hours or days on end as spectators on the rest of the world, do not have a stimulating environment. That does not take into account the violence that they may be watching on television and the denigration of the individual that occurs in television programmes.

Cuts in nurseries have an effect. Increasing class sizes make it extremely difficult for teacher to deal helpfully and sympathetically with disruptive pupils. Instead, they must resort to disciplinary measures to control pupils because they do not have time to do anything else.

Often, a disruptive pupil in an infant or primary school is a cry for help. We should recognise it as such and try to do something about it. If the teacher does not have time and the pastoral work of the school is neglected because of cuts in education budgets, there is a knock-on effect.

If youth centres close down because of a lack of money to pay youth workers, there is a knock-on effect. The police in my community recognised that to the extent that, last summer, they paid for most of the cost of a summer youth project that operated in two large schools in the borough of Islington. I applaud them for doing it. I visited the schemes on several occasions. The justification of the police for paying most of the costs was that it cut down the number of young people roaming the streets with nothing to do, and cut down the amount of crime.

It should be the job of the local authority to pay for such a youth service. The local authority could not afford it because of the expenditure cuts made by central Government. We must recognise that that is an important aspect. The cut in social services expenditure has meant that a number of children on the at-risk register do not have social workers allocated to them. There are many other related issues.

I shall conclude with two quick points because I recognise the pressure of time. There is a danger in the speeches made by several hon. Members, especially Conservative Members, who said that it is important to get tough on crime. It is also important to get tough on justice and miscarriages of justice. If people are to have any confidence in the judicial system, they must see that miscarriages of justice are being examined. At present, I understand that the Home Office is examining more than 600 cases of miscarriages of justice which must be dealt with.

We must look to our own society—the greed, misery, poverty, unemployment, violence and exploitation—for what leads to such a miserable life for so many people who become victims of crime. They are often victims of a minor crime which grows into the sort of fortress mentality which is developing throughout our inner-city communities.

2.3 pm

Mr. Michael: With the leave of the House, I shall reply briefly. If the Minister has listened as he promised he would, he must acknowledge that the case that I made at the start has been widely endorsed.

There is a case for a national strategy pinning responsibility on the Minister, for developing that strategy and for providing resources, while supporting the police, the local authority and the community in making their analysis of local problems and developing well-targeted programmes to tackle the problems in communities. That is the sort of partnership we need, and calls have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House to develop it.

In a thoughtful speech, the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) said that he wanted to see more police on the beat. I must remind the House that that was a promise in the Conservative party's election manifesto to which reference has been made today. I remind the Minister and other Conservative Members of what the Labour manifesto says:

> "Elected police authorities will use the extra resources available for the war against crime to ensure that more police officers are visible on the beat, backed by the modern technology which is essential to crime prevention and detection."

We got a balance in our proposal and it does little to strengthen the arguments of Conservative Members when they seek to misrepresent that.

Hon. Members such as the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley) asked why we had to wait two or three years for action on problems that exist now. Why does so much bureaucracy surround the police? My hon. Friend the Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) rightly underlined the importance of values and

[Mr. Michael]

structure to bring out the best in our young people. We must look at how we bring out the best as well as how we tackle the bad.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick) ended on a note that was appropriate to his attitude during the debate. He said that he would not listen. That is a problem for all of us, but perhaps more for the Minister. It is a problem of a section of the modern Conservative party that is complacent and will not listen. The hon. Gentleman claimed that our interest was recent, but that simply is not true. He should remember the esteem in which my predecessor Lord Callaghan was held. I have been involved in law and order issues for 20 years of practical experience, as have many of my right hon. and hon. Friends who take an interest in the issue.

I remember coming to the House in 1986 to discuss juvenile crime. I left greatly encouraged by the detailed grasp of the problems shown by my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who made an excellent speech earlier. He demonstrated that concern and understanding are the only basis for real toughness and protecting our communities from the effects of crime.

My right hon. Friend referred to the imbalance in dealing with offences and dealing with people in Conservative Britain. I share his anger at the devastation that has befallen local people as housing and leisure facilities have been cut and young people everywhere are left to drift. He was right to refer to the undermining of drug and alcohol rehabilitation centres against the advice of the all-party group on alcohol misuse and the all-party group of drug misuse. Conservative and Opposition Members have warned Ministers of the effects that will flow from that decision and from the Government's reneging on their promise to ring fence the funds. The anger expressed in one of our meetings by Conservative peers was certainly as strong as that of Labour Members. Yet Ministers have disregarded all the advice that they have been given.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) highlighted the need for speed in acting on a young person's offence. He was right. The way in which we deal with our own children is to react immediately to misbehaviour. It is when we do not react immediately that the problems start. Yet our court system allows people to drift for a long period. It takes far too long to bring the young person before the court and to reach a decision. That is one of the major problems of our time. No one seems to own the court system. No one is truly responsible for it. That issue needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency, as we promised to do if we won the general election.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was rightly scathing about the Government's failure in crime prevention and to undertake sufficiently targeted work to reduce crime. I welcome his recognition of the benefits of street lighting and other positive actions to reduce the opportunity of crime.

The hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) said one sentence with which we could all agree. I choose the sentence carefully. He said that there was a crisis of confidence in the criminal justice system in Britain. I would hardly agree, however, and neither, I am sure, would the Minister, with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that we should simply lock young people up and throw away the key. The short, sharp shock failed because it was a knee-jerk reaction—like the reactions of the hon. Gentleman.

We must all recognise that only one in 25 offences result in a young person appearing before a court to be sentenced or given a caution. So 24 out of 25 offences do not lead to that result. We may have doubts about figures, but it is certain that the bulk of offences do not result in a court appearance or caution. That should lead us to say that we want to tackle the 24 as well as the one. If we are to do that, we must examine carefully the effectiveness of prevention and creating a society in which offences do not occur.

The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) will probably feel insulted if I describe his speech as balanced. He rightly said that the majority of offenders respond and the minority do not. I hope that he agrees that we need to identify the numbers involved, the ages of those involved, where they are, where facilities should be located and what is the best regime for reforming young people. Unfortunately, the Home Secretary has signally failed to make that identification. In a parliamentary answer to me, he said that he had been able to identify 106 young people in 41 police authorities. He rightly said that there was some doubt about whether that covered the whole problem.

The problem was that that was hasty research to justify a judgment that had already been made, rather than careful and open-minded research which I hope that the Minister will agree that we should seek, so that we go out to find the real problems. We should amend the monitoring system to make it more effective and to enable proper policy decisions to be taken. We should undertake more research on the effectiveness of different solutions.

Having done all that, we should not just say, "That's interesting; somebody ought to do something." The Minister should put in place a national strategy and the necessary resources to curtail the continued rise in crime.

I welcome the comments on domestic violence made by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche). Courts have certainly been slow to respond to repetitive domestic violence, which can be among the most frightening and dangerous offences to the victim. I was disappointed at the Government's curt dismissal of the thrust of the Morgan report, which my hon. Friend also highlighted. That disappointment is shared throughout the country and people find it difficult to understand why the Government turned it down in that way in December.

The hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) returned to his obsession with comparing the 1990s with the 1930s, but there have been complex changes in society. Far earlier than the 1930s, Plato's Socratic dialogues contained an interesting discussion about the unruliness of the young, and the fact that the next generation was not behaving as they did in the good old days that their fathers and grandfathers could remember. We must study what is happening now, in the ethos of an accelerated society and in the electronic age of video and television.

We must accept the Home Secretary's grudging admission that social causes have an impact on crime. As hon. Members have said, some of those causes are obvious. The devil makes work for idle hands and if Ministers create greater idleness, through their cuts, there

will be more work for the devil to do. Like other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I believe that there is evil for us to tackle and to fight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) was right to emphasise truancy, as 50 per cent. of truants offend, compared to 15 per cent. of non-truants, and that needs to be tackled.

In conclusion, we need from the Government more action without delay, better monitoring and more and better-targeted research. Projects that work locally should be spread more widely, as part of a national strategy to tackle crime. We also require the Government to accept that they must provide the resources for the police, local authorities and communities to work together. Above all, we need the Government to keep their promises and to provide secure accommodation. Despite past promises, they have not done so.

When Ministers recognise that they have a responsibility to young people in the community, we shall be on the way back to a society in which everyone can accept and receive the protection of the law, and that is the serious message which I want the Minister to take from the debate.

2.12 pm

Mr. Jack: With permission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to reply to an excellent debate, which has set before the House the views with which I started the debate. Crime is complex, emotional and difficult, and everyone has a view—there are lots of solutions, but some are difficult to achieve.

Conservative Members have unequivocally and clearly laid out our strategy for dealing with crime and crime prevention and have pointed out, in stark terms, the resources that we have brought to bear on the matter.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) and my hon. Friends the Members for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) and for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) have been kind enough to tell me that they would not be able to join us for the winding-up speeches. I am grateful to them and to other hon. Members for their contribution to the debate.

I must inform the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) that we have done a great deal of research. It is sad that many Opposition Members do not read the information that the Home Office turns out, as was revealed during the debate on street lighting. That information is available.

In the minutes left to me, I shall try to comment on contributions to the debate. I listened to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) with care. I understand the problems that he and his constituents face, but he fell into the trap of presenting us with an over-simplistic analysis of crime, and having done so went on to discuss some of the great complexities. His thinking was muddled.

The hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien), in common with a number of hon. Members, spoke about the availability of secure accommodation for juvenile offenders under the existing arrangements. By the end of 1995, 65 places will be available and the not inconsiderable sum of £680,000 will be spent on the project in the present financial year. In the following two financial years, £3·7 million and £5·9 million will be spent respectively. The project is under the direction of the Department of Health and it has taken the lead in negotiating with local authorities to ensure that those resources are properly spent.

I did not agree with what the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North said about juveniles. If he has genuinely listened to his constituents, as I have to mine, he will know that they warmly welcome our action on juvenile offenders. People are fed up with those young criminals, with long criminal records, who slip through our criminal justice system. They welcome the Home Secretary's decision to develop policy on that issue.

Mr. John Greenway: I gather that, this morning, at Durham Crown court, a 14-year-old boy failed to appear. He has 43 previous convictions and he has already pleaded guilty in another court this week to helping to rape a 15-year-old girl, mugging a 78-year-old woman and taking cars. What are we supposed to do with such young offenders if we do not adopt the Home Secretary's proposals?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend has made a powerful additional point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) made some interesting remarks on the Criminal Justice Act 1991. I thank him for those succinct comments and for his written representation on the subject, which I shall study with care. I welcome his support for the work that we are undertaking on juveniles.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) made a spirited speech. He laid particular emphasis on the importance of sentence length and the most effective way in which to deal with serious crime. Average sentence length for assaults against the person has increased under the Government by 15 per cent. The average length of sentence for rape increased, quite properly, by more than 70 per cent. between 1984 and 1989, following Court of Appeal guidance in 1986. That shows that we take the question of being tough on crime seriously, unlike the Opposition who, on many occasions, have thwarted our attempts to introduce hard-hitting criminal justice policy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle also asked about the Bail (Amendment) Bill, which is still before the House. We are listening carefully to the arguments put forward and we have undertaken much work to deal with the concerns that have been expressed about bail. My hon. Friend was also right to draw the House's attention to the importance of rights and responsibilities. The balance in that argument has, sadly, gone out of kilter.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), in a characteristic pithy contribution, drew our attention to urban crime and police effectiveness. I hope that he will have a chance to read today's edition of the *Evening Standard*, which has reported on the excellent details that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has released about the way in which he intends to highlight the performance of our police forces.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West was right to talk about the effectiveness of the police. I am also glad that he spoke about crime on the underground and acknowledged the improvements that have been made.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am a fair man.

Mr. Jack: He is indeed and I hope that he always pays them on the underground. I am sure that he does.

[Mr. Jack]

I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention, and that of the House, to the research undertaken by Simon Field, on behalf of the Home Office. It deals in unequivocal and plain terms with the causes of crime, analysis of which has underlined many of today's contributions. His analysis has tried to point out that there is no simplistic connection between levels of unemployment and crime per se. The Government understand that crime occurs with all too sad frequency in our urban areas; many of our urban programmes are designed to address that problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) referred to sentencing, if indirectly, when he mentioned the Criminal Justice Act 1988. He will know that the Opposition opposed the ability that that Act provides to review a sentence should it be considered too lenient. I entered Parliament after the 1987 election and questions about lenient sentences were among the most oft asked during that election campaign. We acted and they opposed, which says something about the Opposition's approach to crime.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and other hon. Members mentioned the Morgan report. We totally endorse the partnership approach contained in that report—it underpins our safer cities projects. However, the fact that the report did not give local authorities a statutory duty is what gets up the noses of Opposition Members.

Opposition Members, particularly those with London constituencies, should go to Brent to see what has been done there. Brent council has formed an effective partnership against crime prevention which has taken away crime from no-go areas. It has done so without being given a statutory responsibility.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green also mentioned domestic violence. She and I are at one on the importance of taking action. We are trying to develop policies—such as the excellent initiative at Islington, which we are supporting through our safer cities project—designed to prevent crime. More importantly, that project deals with preventable violent crime. That shows our intent to become involved in the detail of some of the important issues. I welcome the work that she and other members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs have done.

The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) spoke with the experience of having been a probation officer. I listened carefully to his thoughtful contribution in which he picked out the role of education. I commend to him the detail of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's statement on juveniles. At its heart are initiatives announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education to deal with truancies and exclusion. If the benefits of education are to be gained by young people, they must be in school. If they are not in school, but playing truant or excluded, how can they learn some of the important lessons?

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge raised important issues relating to the Criminal Justice Act 1991. I undertake to read carefully and draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary some of the important issues that my hon. Friend raised about the operation of that Act. When considering the concept of the proportionality of sentencing, it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the Act gives the courts powers to take serious action where serious crime occurs. Much as it is right to debate hon. Members' concerns about section 29(2) and unit fines, I hope that my hon. Friend will support the Government in their endeavours to outline to the public the contribution to thwarting serious crime that the Act can make.

My challenge is to convince the House and members of the public that our probation service can use community punishments that are demanding, even when serious crimes are involved. The probation service is anxious to demonstrate its effectiveness. From what I have seen, the work that it can do through community-based sentencing can be effective in dealing with serious crimes. Anyone who met the no-nonsense lady in Manchester would be left in no doubt that, even in that area, the probation service can make a vital contribution.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) spoke with the passion of a constituency Member of Parliament concerned about events in her locality. Were she present to hear what I am saying, I should draw her attention to the objectives of the royal commission. The hon. Lady talked about the investigation and subsequent events surrounding the actions of police officers in her constituency. The raison d'etre of that commission is to deal with the sort of issues that the hon. Lady outlined. I hope that she will forgive me if I do not comment in detail on the specific officers as she asked me to do, but the collection of evidence and the other important matters that she raised are covered by the royal commission.

The hon. Lady also mentioned drugs. I acknowledge how much that problem troubles her constituents. Her area is benefiting from the excellent Home Office drug prevention initiative which we recently announced would be extended until 1995.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) made a singular and important contribution to the debate. He underlined the importance of the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992. We are committed to legislating at an early opportunity to increase sentences from five to 10 years when death results from dangerous driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. I hope that that will command the support of the House. I thank my hon. Friend for his comments on juvenile justice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield made his speech in his unique way—we will make of it what we will—and articulated an idea to which we are committed: that we need robust action against crime.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland spoke about his party's action on crime and rightly emphasised crime prevention. I wish that he had read the Home Office research into lighting and crime; if he had, he would know that we do take it seriously. I also wish that he had read his party leader's letter to my right hon. and learned Friend in which he attempted, in two paragraphs, to spell out the Liberals' crime prevention policy and spent the rest of the letter discussing credit card fraud, as if it were the only crime worthy of note. I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman is not here to hear these remarks.

The hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) talked about Lambeth. I live there and I understand some of the problems that he mentioned. His opening comments echoed the importance that I attach to the work that we are doing for the victims of crime. We also accept the importance of diversionary activity to take young people

away from the temptations of crime. I think for instance of the excellent Trax project which I recently visited in Oxfordshire; it deals with motor offences. The Home Office is funding 30 such projects around the country.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colne Valley—unfortunately, he is no longer here—mentioned violence. Sir Anthony Hopkins has been mentioned more than once. One of the reasons why he is reluctant to make another film like "The Silence of the Lambs" is that he learnt that a 12-year-old had been watching it. Why was a 12-year-old allowed to see the film? What on earth were its parents doing? I also draw my hon. Friend's attention to remarks, quoted in the *Daily Express*, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who draws our attention to the need for the television and movie producers

"to curb the diet of violence".

They have a responsibility, like others, to play their part in the fight against crime.

Hon. Members have mentioned cautioning: 87 per cent. of those cautioned are not reconvicted within two years, but policy in this area is left to the discretion of chief constables.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) made a personal statement about crime and urban problems in and around Manchester. I wish that he had done justice to what is happening there—£19·6 million is being spent under the urban programme, there are city grants of up to £6·6 million to private developers, there is derelict land grant worth £3·5 million, there is the city challenge, worth £7·5 million, and there is backing for the Olympic games fund. Car crime in Manchester actually fell between July 1991 and June 1992.

I accept the right hon. Gentleman's points about his constituency. He expressed them with passion and with knowledge, but it is important not to paint a completely black picture of Manchester and to acknowledge the Government's efforts to deal with some of its urban problems.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) drew our attention to crime prevention and bail issues. I welcomed what he said about the Churches. They certainly have a major responsibility to make a contribution to the moral debate in this country.

Among the many interesting points raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley), for Uxbridge and for Eastbourne were matters connected with the side-handled baton and the protection of the police. Work continues in the Home Office working group on ways to protect our police officers. As hon. Members know, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is not yet persuaded on that weapon.

I listened to the hon.Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth——

Mr. Michael: That was kind of the Minister.

Mr. Jack: I am glad that he thinks that that was kind of me. I have left my reply to the hon. Gentleman until last because, in my opening speech I dealt with everything that he and his hon. Friends had to say. It is the Conservative party which has a clear strategy on crime and a record of dealing effectively with it. We have put more resources into the police and our courts and Prison Service. Ours was not the party which devoted——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 10th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Clarke relating to Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism not later than Seven o'clock.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Motion made,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 10th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to the Court of Auditors of the European Communities not later than one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon; and the said Motion may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 10th March, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Howard relating to Urban Development not later than one and a half hours after the Motion has been entered upon; and the said Motion may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

EUROPEAN STANDING COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That the Court of Auditors' Annual Report for 1991 (O.J., c. 330, Vol. 35), together with the institutions' replies, and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 25th February 1993, relating to the Council's discharge of the General Budget of the European Communities for 1991, shall not stand referred to European Standing Committee B.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

LIAISON

Ordered,

That Mr. Paul Channon, Mr. Michael J. Martin, Mr. Ray Powell, Mr. Colin Shepherd and Mr. Gary Waller be added to the Liaison Committee.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Textile Industry (Lancashire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Gordon Prentice (Pendle): I hope that you will bear with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because my voice is somewhat fragile. I shall begin with a story of our times. On 19 January, Smith and Nephew, one of Pendle's largest employers, announced that it was laying off 574 people and pulling out of cotton spilling, gauze weaving and denim production. That decision means that the United Kingdom will no longer make denim. That is a reflection of what is happening across the nation.

The decision might make commercial sense to one company, and the management has explained its reasoning to me in detail, but for the country as a whole the decision makes no sense whatever. It represents a further contraction in our manufacturing base which, as Lord Prior said earlier this week, will take 20 years to rebuild. It represents a cost to the Exchequer of £9,000 per person or over £5 million in total in forgone taxes, benefits and dole payments.

The Government ought to recognise the importance of textiles to the British economy. Even now, after 14 years of Conservative government, textiles have sales of £15 billion, exports are worth £4·8 billion and its work force, although steadily contracting, is just under 400,000. In my area in the north-west, strenuous efforts have been made to make the industry more efficient. Investment has been running at £80 million a year, but there has been retrenchment, closures and redundancies. There has been a real contraction in our manufacturing base and that has significant implications for our balance of payments, which was already in deficit last year for apparel and textiles to the tune of £3·8 billion.

The closures and contractions in textiles can be taken as a proxy for what is happening to manufacturing generally. In my maiden speech I was proud to tell the House that I represented a constituency in which 55 per cent. of people were employed in manufacturing. That was the highest percentage of any constituency in Britain, or at least that used to be the case. At that time, in early May last year, I mentioned a string of job losses in textiles, including 170 in that same firm, Smith and Nephew. There were also job losses in Dawes and Company and in CV Woven Fabrics; and Thomas Mason, a 200-year-old firm, closed its doors for the last time in December 1991.

In 1989, the latest year for which figures are available —and they pre-date the current deep recession—3,800 people were employed in textiles in Pendle. That represents 23 per cent. of manufacturing employment and 12 per cent. of total employment. However, there has been such a haemorrhage of jobs recently that my constituency's distinction of being known as the manufacturing capital of Britain may now be inaccurate. Given the importance of manufacturing, my constituents would have been extremely interested in what the Prime Minister had to say yesterday on the subject. Apparently, he believes in manufacturing. It seems that in the 1980s he was in a minority in the Conservative Cabinet in taking that view, and it was throughout that period that the textile industry in Lancashire was flattened. From 1979 to 1991, nearly 20,000 jobs were lost in textiles. That figure represents the position 14 months ago and takes no account of the recent acceleration in redundancies.

In the United Kingdom as a whole, there are 4,524,000 people employed in manufacturing, a fall of 2,737,000, or 38 per cent., since 1979. In the period in which I am most interested—that since the right hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major) became Prime Minister—there has been a fall of 555,000 in the manufacturing sector, a contraction of 11 per cent. We can see how the Prime Minister cares desperately about manufacturing.

In the north-west, the figures are chilling. Employment in manufacturing is 560,000, down from 971,000 in 1979. That is a cataclysmic collapse of 42 per cent. and the second worst fall in Britain. But the Prime Minister tells us that he believes in manufacturing. Since he entered No. 10, we have lost another 75,000 manufacturing jobs in the north-west. Another 12 per cent. of these jobs have gone —just vaporised. It has been the third worst fall in Britain.

Unemployment in my constituency has increased by 85 per cent. since the right hon. Member for Huntingdon became Prime Minister. In the north-west as a whole, it has increased by a more modest 37 per cent.

The Prime Minister is good at wringing his hands and blaming others for the misfortunes that are plaguing the country. He is good at blaming everyone but himself. The right hon. Gentleman has told us about his own experience of unemployment. On 18 November 1991, *The Sun* reported him as saying:

"I remember very clearly how it felt morning after morning to go out looking for work, lunchtime after lunchtime finding that there wasn's any. I felt low and demoralised."

I wonder how the Prime Minister feels about the unemployed in my constituency, including those who have lost their jobs since he entered No. 10. In my constituency, there are 15 people chasing every vacancy in Pendle. In the north-west as a whole, there are 27 people chasing every vacancy. From where is employment to come from to soak up the cascade of job losses?

The earlier debate, on crime and crime prevention, was opened by the Minister of State, Home Office, the hon. Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack). He achieved some notoriety when he was a Minister at the Department of Social Security. He said on 13 December 1992, following the redundancies at British Aerospace at Preston,

"Lancashire does have a robustness among small businesses to absorb some of the skilled people who will be liberated as a result of the cutbacks."

In Lancashire, we are fed up with being "liberated". My constituents and millions like them throughout the country want jobs. For that to happen, the Government must implement a strategy for industry, including textiles. At present, there is a gaping hole where that strategy should be.

I return to Smith and Nephew to illustrate the point. The President of the Board of Trade, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), told the Conservative conference on 7 October 1992 that he would spare no efforts to promote, encourage and support our manufacturing industry. He told the conference that he would intervene.

"before breakfast, before lunch, before tea and before dinner".

Where is the evidence of any intervention? I contacted the right hon. Gentleman the day after the 574 job losses at Smith and Nephew were announced to ask him about his pre-prandial interventions. He told me that while he

regretted the closure, it was the company's decision. He told me that his Department received no specific representations about denim or denim cloth during its recent discussions with the textile industry. He said that there were no discussions about denim in the run-up to the two-year extension of the bilateral multi-fibre arrangement. He said that the European Commission was ready to act on claims of dumping, but his Department knew of no approach from any United Kingdom company in respect of denim goods. That man is supposed to be in charge of Britain's trade with the rest of the world, yet he does not know what is going on.

The management say that despite past investment, relentless and increasing competition from low-cost sources in developing countries meant that the country could no longer compete effectively in denim production. They told me of unfair trading practices that put the United Kingdom at a disadvantage and mentioned the wholesale transfer of denim manufacture from Italy and Belgium to the countries of eastern Europe.

What did the Department of Trade and Industry's regional arm do to advise Smith and Nephew when all that was happening? Did the DTI know of the company's difficulties? What representations are the Government making to the EC about the transfer of denim manufacturing capacity to east European countries? Why is that in the period January to November 1992, Germany could export to the United Kingdom denim worth £4·3 million; Italy, £2·6 million; Belgium, £1·5 million; and other EC countries, £6·8 million? The United Kingdom was awash with denim imports, yet did the Government do anything about that?

The Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance—AKT—is concerned about the implications of improved access to the European Community market for the countries of central and eastern Europe. It informs me that imports from those countries in sectors of the textile and clothing trade are growing rapidly—even under present arrangements. The terms of trade with those countries are still distorted by their state trading past.

Manufacturers may be attracted to eastern and central Europe by permissive environmental standards, which can be an important factor in the textile industry. The prospects of the cotton industry—and, by implication, the denim sector—have been damaged by foreign Governments subsidising their domestic producers. Egypt, India, Pakistan and China are notorious in that respect. They all export to the United Kingdom, but there is no reciprocity.

India prohibits imports of textiles and clothing if similar goods are produced domestically, and slap penal tariffs of 200 per cent. or more on the remainder. Taiwan, Japan and other countries allow registration of brand names that falsely imply United Kingdom origin. Turkish textile and clothing producers benefit from large subsidies, the supply of cotton at below world market prices and protection by a whole battery of duties.

South Korea has announced a £2·5 million subsidy scheme for its textile and clothing industries. Even within the European Community, countries such as Belgium, France, Spain and Italy persist in subsidising their textile and clothing industries. I shall be interested to hear the Minister's observations on that point.

The textile industry was last discussed in the House on 17 December, in an Adjournment debate introduced by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), when the Minister mentioned the DTI's restructuring to take account of the importance of textiles. The Minister said that that had been put in hand by the President of the Board of Trade, and

"included the establishment of sectoral divisions to improve dialogue between the Department and all sections of industry. That has led to the creation of the textiles and retail division."

Its specific task, the House was told, was to ensure

"a high-level dialogue with the industry, good contact at all levels and a good knowledge of the industry."—[*Official Report*, 17 December 1992; Vol. 216, c. 559.]

There was no contact, no dialogue, in the case of 574 redundancies at Smith and Nephew—not a corner shop, but a major company. The announcement must have come like a bolt from the blue to the President of the Board of Trade whose job it is to understand such matters.

I want the Government to give weight to the AKT's action plan. As the Minister knows, the United Kingdom textile industry is confident that it will be able to compete under a new GATT. It accepts the phasing out of the multi-fibre arrangement over the next 10 years, during which period tariffs will progressively replace quotas—with an important proviso. The GATT rules and disciplines must be strengthened, particularly on subsidisation, surveillance, copyright and access for United Kingdom exports.

I hope that the Minister will also urge the Chancellor of the Exchequer not to slap value added tax on children's clothing, which is currently zero rated. According to the Government's own figures, the extension of standard-rate VAT to children's clothing would cost consumers an additional £600 million per year, and would have a devastating effect on poorer families; it would also have serious implications for children's wear manufacturers and for the companies that supply them with fabric and yarn in my part of Lancashire, where a substantial amount of children's wear is produced.

The possible impact of Northern Ireland subsidies is also very important. Many producers in mainland Britain are becoming increasingly concerned about the possible distorting effect of such subsidies on competition. One instance is the recent announcement of an award by the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board to the Indonesian textile company Texmaco of £14·6 million to set up an operation weaving filament synthetic fabric.

The IDB claims to have carried out market studies which concluded that the output of the new plant would involve products—micro-fibre polyester fabric—that would not compete with the output of companies on the mainland; but there is some doubt about that. Some weavers, including weavers in my constituency, believe that the output will compete, directly or indirectly, with their own products and that a competitor from Northern Ireland with large amounts of Government assistance will have implications for their own activities.

It would be helpful if the Minister could give me an assurance that full studies will be made of the impact on employment in Great Britain before approval is given to any new projects in the Province. I believe that a second filament weaver, Hualon of Taiwan, is trying to secure IDB support. Large quantities of synthetic fibre are produced in my constituency, in Nelson, by William Reed Weaving, and next door in Padiham.

Above all, I want an assurance that the Government are alive to the many problems facing the textile industry, not just in Pendle and in Lancashire, but throughout the

[Mr. Gordon Prentice]

country. I want an assurance that they will intervene energetically to ensure that we are on a level playing field with our global competitors.

2.47 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I congratulate the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on choosing a subject that I know is of great importance to his constituents, on the first occasion when he has been lucky enough to secure an Adjournment debate. I also congratulate him on getting through his speech so well, despite his voice difficulties—with the no doubt welcome support of the hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mrs. Prentice). We would all like the same kind of support on occasion.

As the hon. Gentleman and the House will know, for centuries the textile industry has been a pillar of the industrial structure of Lancashire, making a tremendous contribution to the economy both locally and nationally. It was said in the 1950s that "Britain's bread hangs by Lancashire's thread". Lancashire is perceived by many as the cradle of the industrial revolution; it was the first area in the country—perhaps in the world—to become heavily industrialised.

Lancashire's textile industry thus became a foundation of the industrial revolution. The first cotton mill was built at Stalybridge in 1776. Throughout most of the 19th century, Lancashire's population and labour force rose at rates well above the national average; at its peak in 1912, 622,000 people were employed in the textile industry, and in 1951 1,750 cotton mills and finishing works were still in production in the textile belt of the north-west.

Of course, the advent of new technologies and stiff competition from overseas has caused the textile industry in Lancashire—and, indeed, throughout Britain—to contract considerably since its heyday. The 1970s saw substantial shrinkage, both in employment in the sector and in the number of firms. Synthetic fibres and cotton-synthetic mixtures, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, have replaced pure cotton in many uses.

The declining employment is, of course, partly due to increasing competition from imports, but I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, to a large extent, it also reflects great increases in productivity as the industry has become more mechanised and the work force more highly skilled. Nationwide, output per employee in the textile industry rose by no less than 73 per cent. in the two decades between 1971 and 1990. There was considerable growth in the output of household textiles—one sector of the textile market—in the 1980s and, by 1988, the household textile market in Britain was worth more than £1 billion at the retail level, with much of the manufacturing concentrated in the north-west. The sector became a highly fashion-oriented industry, emphasising style and colour. The industry also developed the ability to respond more quickly to changes in consumer requirements: turnround times from order to delivery are now often measured in just a few days. Substantial investment has been made by the industry to achieve those changes.

In 1988, capital expenditure in the textiles and clothing sector in the north-west was more than £100 million—about 20 per cent. of total United Kingdom investment in the sector. Although the textile industry has declined in importance, the Government recognise that the industry continues to play a most important part in the economy of the north-west, especially of Lancashire. In 1989, some 83,000 people worked in the industry in the north-west —nearly 13 per cent. of the region's manufacturing employment. According to the 1990 census of production, output from the textile and clothing sector in the north-west was almost £1.2 billion, or 18·2 per cent. of the United Kingdom total. There is a strong concentration of employment in textiles and clothing in the east Lancashire and Manchester area, especially in parts of north-east Lancashire.

The industry, as the hon. Gentleman knows, faces stiff competition from far eastern producers and, increasingly, from producers around the Mediterranean rim. That competition must be expected to intensify as foreign producers become more efficient and more skilled at responding to market requirements. It is proposed that the successful conclusion of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations will entail the phasing out over 10 years of the multi-fibre arrangement, under which the United Kingdom and other developed country textile producers have had a measure of protection from imports from low-cost sources.

I firmly believe that the Uruguay round package, on the lines now being negotiated, will be strongly to the advantage of Britain. It will result in a massive stimulus to international trade. It will improve market access for our manufactured products to overseas markets in developed and developing countries, and our textile and clothing industries stand to benefit from the increased export opportunities that will result.

The gradual liberalisation of our domestic market as the MFA is phased out will bring benefits. Increasing exposure to international competition will provide British consumers with much improved choice and greater purchasing power through being able to buy goods from British or overseas suppliers that offer better value for money. The hon. Gentleman referred to the importance of textiles to families with a number of children; that is important to them as well. The increased purchasing power of overseas textile producers will result in increased purchasing opportunities for our exporters.

Throughout the negotiations, the Government have been in close touch with the industry and the Apparel, Knitting and Textiles Alliance. The message that we get from the industry is that although it feels that the proposed agreement is far from perfect, it acknowledges that it is the best on offer, and better than solutions that would not solve the problem of trade distortions. That is in line with the Government's view: the proposed settlement is the best compromise that we could hope for as it offers a constructive framework for an orderly integration of the industry into the GATT system.

I am very glad that so many of our textile and clothing companies have realised the importance of responding to international competition, not by calling for protection but by improving their performance in such key areas as value for money and quick response, improved quality and more emphasis on good design and marketing.

The textile industry is only one part of the whole United Kingdom manufacturing industry, and the Government have always fully recognised its importance. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree that productivity is as vital to the textile industry as it is to other parts of industry. Improvements in productivity, such as those achieved in

the 1980s by British manufacturing industry when our productivity grew faster than that of any of our major competitors and increased by more than 50 per cent., are absolutely vital to its continued success. The encouragement of those improvements must be a key element of any policy that constitutes an industrial strategy.

It would be disastrous if the Government were to show that they recognised the importance of manufacturing industry by giving handouts to unsuccessful companies or through the nationalisation of businesses that failed. It is sad that the Opposition still appear to believe that such action would constitute an industrial strategy. Successful, efficient and productive businesses will succeed not only in the home market but in overseas markets.

Mr. Prentice: Does the Minister accept that although productivity is important, the overall size of the industry is also critical? The textile industry is contracting to such an extent that we are losing the critical mass necessary for it to remain viable.

Mr. Sainsbury: I agree that the size of our industrial base is important across a range of industries, but we shall not have an expanding industry if it is not productive. That is the message I am trying to put across. It is the efficient industry which will have the opportunity not only to obtain a greater share of the home market but to make gains in export markets.

I should have liked to say more about exports, but I must respond briefly to what the hon. Gentleman said about Smith and Nephew. I understand why he wanted to comment on that particular firm. He mentioned the firm's recent decision not to close but to restructure by concentrating on supplying the high-tech medical textiles sector and to cease its denim weaving operations.

My Department has maintained links with Smith and Nephew for many years, and I visited the company myself on 22 August 1990. It showed me the difference between the medical textile sector, which is clearly a growth area and requires particular skills, and the denim weaving sector to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I am aware of and understand the concern to which the changes announced by the company have given rise in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. He has several times drawn attention to the consequences for employment there and elsewhere.

The difficult decision, sadly, means that a number of jobs will be lost, but ultimately commercial decisions by firms as to what will keep them competitive and efficient in the marketplace must be for them to make. There seemed to be a hint in what the hon. Gentleman said that he would have liked the Government to step in either with a hand out or to tell the company what to do. It is not what I regard—and I hope that it is not what he would regard—as a sensible move for the relations between Government and manufacturing industry. Commercial decisions have to be taken by the firms themselves. They have to bear in mind the constant need to maintain their competitiveness. Smith and Nephew's decision will mean that its position is more secure in the competitive market by concentrating on the more profitable part of its business.

The hon. Gentleman referred to unfair competition. I agree that we must continue to deal with it, wherever it is found. We must have effective measures for so doing, such as those against dumping or export subsidies. The draft GATT agreement to which I have already referred will continue to commit the European Community to take action in such cases. Indeed, the revisions to the GATT anti-dumping code proposed in the Uruguay round will tighten procedures and make them more transparent. Some of the new procedures envisaged, such as sampling, are already being practised by the Commission.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the textile industry in Northern Ireland. I am aware that some companies in the United Kingdom textile industry have expressed concern about a recent decision by the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland to provide selective financial assistance to the Indonesian company Texmaco for a project to make micro-denier polyester fabrics. The companies are worried that the project could deflate output at other factories already operating in the United Kingdom. It is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but I can say that the Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board's assessment concluded that the company could achieve its forecast output primarily at the expense of imports rather than domestic production.

I end by repeating what I said earlier. The Government fully recognise the importance of the textile industry through the textiles and retail division in my Department. We keep in close and continuous contact with the industry and will continue to work with it to help it become more efficient, more productive and, therefore, more successful.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 8 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

West Coast Main Line

1. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will sponsor a cost-benefit study of proposals to upgrade the west coast main line to accommodate 250 km per hour passenger trains and associated improved freight services.

8. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss investment plans for the west coast main line.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John MacGregor): At present, it is for British Rail, as operator of the west coast main line, to bring forward a cost benefit study into its upgrading. BR intends to start the resignalling work in this corporate plan period. Following the establishment of Railtrack in April 1994, this responsibility will pass to that body.

Mr. Hoyle: Would not it be better to ask BR for the proposals instead of the Secretary of State shunting us into the siding of rail privatisation? He must agree that money should be spent immediately on the west coast line in the way that money has been spent on the east coast line, to provide efficient rolling stock, efficient track, efficient signalling and an efficient rail service. Instead of having a charter of complaints—the citizens charter—funds should be made available immediately for rail projects for this vital rail link.

Mr. MacGregor: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman accepts that there has been substantial investment in the east coast main line: some £550 million. There has been substantial investment throughout British Rail. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that investment is currently running at record levels. However, not everything can be done at once. As I have said, in the context of its corporate plan, which will be coming to me fairly soon, BR is currently looking at resignalling work. The hon. Gentleman asked about rolling stock. The Government's contribution remains at record levels, but, inevitably, as a result of the recession, there has been a decline in revenue and British Rail decided that it was not prudent to proceed at this stage with work on the rolling stock, which is likely to cost about £350 million. It is considering its rolling stock strategy and will no doubt present proposals in due course.

Mr. Martlew: Over the past decade, the Government have starved the west coast main line of investment. Bearing that in mind, will the Minister ensure that the £150 million that was made available in the autumn statement is spent on that line? It would be a travesty for that money to be spent in any other region, including Network SouthEast. Not only would there be anger in my constituency, but the users of the line from Birmingham all the way up the west coast and including those in Belfast would be angry.

Mr. MacGregor: The £150 million of leasing to which the hon. Gentleman refers is, of course, a major new contribution which the Government have made available to British Rail. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman acknowledges that. We have asked British Rail to confirm by Easter what rolling stock it proposes to lease and for which lines. Is it for British Rail to make the decisions and I have no doubt that it will hear what the hon. Gentleman has said and will take it into account.

Mr. Jopling: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the unreliability of that line causes many people not to use it unless they are absolutely forced to do so? Does he realise that it will be necessary for much money to be spent on the line fairly soon? Is it true that work on signalling will begin this year? Will my right hon. Friend play his part and try to kick some life into the management at the top of British Rail, who do not seem to have got out of their old, bad, complacent habits and who are a contributory factor to the unacceptability of the line?

Mr. MacGregor: I acknowledge that the upgrading of the line is necessary, both in terms of rolling stock and of the infrastructure. I cannot give my right hon. Friend a date: it is for British Rail to come forward with proposals on resignalling. As I said, that is being considered in the context of the corporate plan. The whole purpose of our privatisation proposals is to improve management and prospects, not only on the west coast main line but throughout the system.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I heartily agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling). I assure my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that we are very proud of the standard of station staff and of their handling of passengers and so on, but we are not satisfied with British Rail management. If British Rail were privatised there would be better investment and a better deal for those who use the line. We are proud of the staff, but we want to be as proud of other parts of the line as we are of Lancaster station.

Mr. MacGregor: As I said earlier, our proposals are intended to improve services to passengers through franchising. It is unlikely that the west coast main line will be among the first, because it was not included in the seven lines that I announced as shadow franchises. I hope that it will follow not long afterwards, so that my hon. Friend can enjoy the benefits to which she looks forward.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Secretary of State accept that all the work has been done and that the cost is known? All that is lacking is political will and Government resources. Is not the right hon. Gentleman concerned that the taxpayers' money invested in the east coast line will be highly attractive to a privatised railway, which will undermine the west coast line? Will the Secretary of State

give an assurance that the strategic route from London to Scotland will be on the west coast line and that he will instruct the track authority to see that it is?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not accept that the investment in the east coast main line will have a particular effect on franchising. The terms of the franchise will reflect a number of factors. I recognise that the east coast investment took place ahead of the west coast main line and I recognise the need to upgrade the infrastructure and rolling stock. However, I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman that there is a lack of political will. Investment is currently at record levels, but we must establish priorities.

Night Flights (Heathrow)

2. **Mr. Jessel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to reach a decision on the number of Heathrow night flights.

Mr. MacGregor: We asked for comments on the proposals to reach us by 30 April. We shall consider all the responses carefully and I hope to announce decisions by the end of June.

Mr. Jessel: As one comment, is my right hon. Friend aware that my constituents regard night flights as totally unacceptable and that any increase would make them very angry? They consider that night flights should be stopped entirely, except in emergencies.

Mr. MacGregor: I hope that my hon. Friend recognises the need for some night movements, but I acknowledge the importance of balancing that requirement with the legitimate concerns of local residents. The present regime attempts to do that. If we did not replace it, there would be no restrictions whatever, so it is right that we should be considering what should be done at the end of the year. I know of my hon. Friend's great concerns, which he has already made clear to me. I assure him that the consultation is genuine and that we shall listen to all representations before we take decisions for the future. We have been endeavouring to seek a better system for the future, taking account of new developments—particularly in aircraft technology.

Mr. Bennett: Does the Secretary of State agree that the most effective way to reduce pressure on Heathrow is to develop regional airports such as Manchester? Will he congratulate Greater Manchester's local authorities on their enterprise and the opening of terminal 2? Will he press British Rail, because it is scandalous that the 40 yd of track needed to link the airport with routes to the south is still not built?

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman's last question was a little remote from the issue of Heathrow night flights. As he knows, we are encouraging regional airports in a variety of ways. There has been a big improvement in regional airport output in recent years—not least at Manchester, which is now a major European airport. I congratulate all involved. I am glad that private sector finance has been involved in that expansion. The right way ahead is to continue the private sector development of regional airports and, wherever possible, privatisation of them, too.

Network SouthEast

3. **Mr. Bowden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Network SouthEast British Rail services improved in 1992.

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): At the end of 1992, 14 out of 15 Network SouthEast service groups were achieving punctuality performance above the level at which compensation would be paid to season ticket holders. The latest results show all 15 above that level. For the most recent four-weekly reporting period, 13 out of 15 routes performed above their punctuality targets.

Mr. Bowden: Is my hon. Friend aware that commuters in my constituency are fed up with cold, dirty trains? If the Brighton line were franchised, what would be in the contract to ensure that trains ran on time and were warm and clean?

Mr. Freeman: I assure my hon. Friend that the franchise contracts will require not only reliability and punctuality targets, but standards of cleanliness. One great advantage of the franchise contract system is that there will be a specific agreement between the franchising director and the rail operator.

Mr. Denham: Does not the Minister recognise that Network SouthEast services are currently being destroyed? Does he know that, in the past six months, many Hampshire stations have had their Sunday services withdrawn? Does he realise that commuter lines from Southampton to Waterloo are being cut, that the service between Southampton and Eastleigh is being cut by 50 per cent. and that the service between Guildford and Portsmouth is changing from semi-fast to stopping trains?

Why does not the Minister recognise that all that is being done to lower the standard of service to the level at which a franchise operator may be able to come in? None of his assurances will take away the reality for rail travellers—that their services are being destroyed around them.

Mr. Freeman: Their services are not being destroyed. British Rail is sensibly accommodating the drop in demand that has resulted from the recession of the past two years and it has therefore had to reduce the frequency of services. However, new 159 class trains are being introduced on the Waterloo to Exeter lines: that represents a substantial investment by Network SouthEast, with the Government's support.

Special Parking Areas (London)

5. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when local boroughs in London will be able to implement special parking areas.

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): We aim to have all the necessary regulations and procedural rules in place in time to enable parking enforcement to begin in special parking areas from 1 July this year.

Dr. Twinn: I congratulate my hon. Friend on that welcome news. Does he agree that it is very good news for Londoners as a whole? Parking regulations will now be properly enforced on the basis of local knowledge—and,

I hope, removed when they are not really necessary—all at no cost to council tax payers, provided that they do not park illegally.

Mr. Norris: My hon. Friend is right. The boroughs themselves asked for the parking areas, which will give them more control, enable them to manage their own problems in their own areas and ensure that the resources released will be available for better enforcement on the priority route programme and elsewhere.

British Rail (Investment)

6. **Sir Roger Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the levels of investment in British Rail.

Mr. MacGregor: I have received several representations about the levels of investment in British Rail. This year is the highest in real terms since 1960.

Sir Roger Moate: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in contrast, the very worst years for railway investment were in the 1970s, under a Labour Government? Did not a Labour Government close more railway miles than any Conservative Government? Nevertheless, new capital investment is still urgently required for Network SouthEast. When might an order be placed for the new, urgently needed Networker express trains for the Kent coast?

Mr. MacGregor: I take my hon. Friend's point. I note that it is always when Labour is in opposition that it calls for higher investment in British Rail and that it is when the Conservatives are in government that that is achieved.

As my hon. Friend will know, British Rail is now examining our proposal for a £150 million leasing scheme. I cannot say yet what projects it will implement to fulfil the orders, but it is for British Rail to decide whether one of them will be the project for which my hon. Friend has pressed. He will also know that we are carrying out substantial resignalling projects, which, although currently causing disruption, are designed to improve the service in the longer term.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Can the Secretary of State confirm or deny reports—particularly in the weekend press—that crossrail and Thameslink will not go ahead, and that the channel tunnel rail link will end at St. Pancras rather than King's Cross? If he is not prepared to make a statement today, will he make one later this month and will it include a final announcement about the Jubilee line?

Mr. MacGregor: There is no change in our position on the Jubilee line, which I have expressed frequently. The Government have made their full provision of £1·4 billion and are waiting for the administrator to complete his talks with the banks and London Underground. I recently received from British Rail two reports in two stages on the channel tunnel rail link. I received the second very recently and I shall make an announcement when I have considered it. There is no change in our position on crossrail, which was outlined in the public expenditure plans for the next three years. The hon. Gentleman will know that Thameslink is not provided for in those three years.

Mr. Adley: What, expressed as a percentage of rail investment, will be the investment figure two years hence, compared with the figure for the current year? Does my right hon. Friend realistically expect any private sector investment to be made in rail infrastructure in the next decade and is not Railtrack the creation of yet another nationalised industry, which unlike British Rail, will not be answerable to passengers?

Mr. MacGregor: I do not have a calculator in my head, so I cannot give my hon. Friend the precise percentage figures now. High investment continues to be made in British Rail and investment this year is the highest in real terms since 1960. I cannot say exactly how much investment will be made in two years' time, not least because that will depend on revenue, but we expect it to be about £1 billion a year, which is a substantial amount indeed. I do not agree with my hon. Friend about Railtrack. Our proposals will create a more efficient track infrastructure and administration. I very much hope that private investment will be made in track over the next 10 years.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Why is the Minister being so coy about investment in British Rail? He knows very well that, without the amount that has been set aside for the channel tunnel and its infrastructure, investment this year would be very poor. It is clear that investment would drop in the next two years. I am sure that he would like to make it clear to Conservative Members that, far from getting better rail services from franchising, they will lose on every count.

Mr. MacGregor: I disagree totally with the hon. Lady's last point. It is fascinating that she suggests that certain aspects of capital expenditure can be ignored as though they did not need financing. British Rail's capital investment in the channel tunnel is good investment indeed. It is a priority for a priority market and it is therefore right to make that investment. The hon. Lady must acknowledge that that requires money, which cannot be spent twice.

Mr. Dunn: Does my right hon. Friend agree that British Rail's ability to invest will improve as revenue grows? Will he therefore welcome BR's decision to introduce a penalty fares scheme on the Kent link sector of Network SouthEast from 5 April next, which will improve its revenue significantly in the years ahead?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend that as revenue improves so do the prospects to increase capital investment over and above the Government's major contribution. As he rightly said, revenue is up as a result of such schemes.

Mr. Wilson: Instead of blustering with bogus statistics, will the Secretary of State confirm the reality that is set out in his own expenditure papers, which shows that investment in the existing railway is already at the lowest level for a decade and that overall investment in British Rail next year will be at its lowest level since nationalisation in 1948? Is that a record of which he is proud? What does he see in a railway? *[Interruption.]* There is no point is asking the Minister for Public Transport because it is true; it is at its lowest level since nationalisation in 1948. Is it the west coast main line that justifies that figure, or the cancellation of Thameslink and crossrail and the loss of other major infrastructure projects? Why are the Government continuing to run down the railways in advance of privatisation, particularly

on routes such as the west coast main line? We shall be left with the rump of a privatised railway while the rest is left to wither on the vine.

Mr. MacGregor: The hon. Gentleman manipulates the statistics. He strips out of the figures what does not suit his case. He ignores the fact that substantial investment is being made elsewhere and refers merely to certain areas as lacking investment. Investment is currently running at levels that have not been higher since 1960 and it will continue at a high level next year. Investment in regional railways will mean that by the end of the year nearly 90 per cent. of rolling stock will be less than eight and a half years old, a change caused as a result of investment. Since the mid-1980s, about 2,500 new passenger vehicles and locomotives have been brought into service. More than 900 are on order and will come into service in the next two years. Such massive changes in rolling stock investment have been made possible because of the capital expenditure that British Rail has incurred and to which the Government have made a substantial contribution.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend will understand that many people are interested in the future of the existing railway. Stripping out the plans for the channel tunnel means a cut in capital investment from £1,000 million a year to £500 million a year.

Will my right hon. Friend argue with his colleagues that, if we want to protect employment, some of the money that might otherwise go in transitional aid to the coal mines should be used for rail capital investment for greater long-term benefit and benefit in terms of jobs?

Mr. MacGregor: I argued the case for British Rail this year and secured £250 million on top of existing plans, in addition to the extra £150 million leasing scheme.

Commuter Fares (Greater London)

9. **Mr. Austin-Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received concerning the level of commuter fares in Greater London.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations on this issue from hon. Members and others.

Mr. Austin-Walker: Has the Minister seen the survey by the Association of London Authorities which shows that the highest commuter fares in Europe are in London? Does he accept that deregulation and the Government's privatisation proposals will threaten children's reduced fares and the London travelcard? Is he aware that London Transport has predicted a 20 per cent. increase in fares as a result of the proposed deregulation and privatisation? Will the Minister for Transport in London accept some responsibility for the chaotic state of London's transport and give the House a guarantee that, after deregulation and privatisation, children's reduced fares and the London travelcard will be protected and will remain at least as beneficial as they are at present?

Mr. Norris: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have made it plain that, after deregulation and privatisation, the concessionary fare arrangements funded by the boroughs will continue. Every operator wants the travelcard scheme, but it would be extraordinarily foolish to preserve the present system in aspic as though it were incapable of improvement. It is perfectly obvious that the operators want to keep the concept of intermodal travel and to develop it, which we shall help them to do.

I am grateful for the opportunity to say straight away that the scare stories that have circulated recently about price increases after privatisation and deregulation, on the buses and on the railways, are mere speculation and are being used cynically to frighten people unnecessarily about the prospects for travel in London.

Dame Angela Rumbold: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is high time that we heard the Labour party's ideas —constructive or otherwise—for London commuters? So far we have heard nothing except, as my hon. Friend said, scare stories and scaremongering, which merely serve to upset people trying to work in London and those seeking work in London and do nothing for the recovery of London and commuters generally.

Mr. Norris: I am tempted to agree with my right hon. Friend, but she is not quite right, as I have heard of a policy from the Labour party. I hear that there is a policy of charging virtually nothing for the system but somehow managing to magic the necessary resources out of thin air —as the Opposition resist the idea that either the user or the taxpayer pays. However, my right hon. Friend is right that no constructive opposition to the Government's proposals is emerging from the Oppositon parties.

Mr. Spearing: Does the Minister understand that his words, which are designed to be of assurance, are no such thing? He talked about speculation. Speculation can turn out to be correct. If the railcard, which is so useful to all citizens in London, is to continue as everyone wishes, and if it can be improved as the Minister says, can it be improved within the concept and operation of future privately franchised railways in Network SouthEast? Is the Minister aware that before the first world war the independent underground railways of London came together to form a group so that there could be reasonable operation and lower fares? How can that be compatible with the Minister's proposals for splitting them up again?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman says that speculation can occasionally turn out to be true, but in my experience over the past 10 years, speculation from the Opposition has more often than not turned out to be absolutely fatuous.

The hon. Gentleman, with his experience of the system, should know that the travelcard has no statutory basis at present. It is an agreement entered into by the operators because they all know that it is a vital way to attract addtional revenue. There is therefore not the slightest reason why private contractors should not want to be in the scheme, and they have told us that they do want to be in it. Indeed, they are developing yet more exciting additions to the basic travelcard concept to increase passenger use of London's transport rather than to reduce it.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the extension of the hopper services to many estates in my constituency and around London, to the delight of pensioners and others? Will my hon. Friend also consider the age of the rolling stock on south-eastern services and see whether it can be modernised more

quickly? Can there be more rolling stock so that people coming to London every day from Ealing do not have to stand?

Mr. Norris: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making the point about hopper buses. He could have made the same point about midi buses. All these developments in more flexible bus operation have arisen as a result of privatisation. They are the result not of a planning-led system but of operators seeking to match the availability of transport to the needs of consumers. I take my hon. Friend's point about rolling stock. I will look into the matter and come back to him.

Mr. Tony Banks: I yield to no one in my admiration for the Minister's ability to sell second-hand Rollers, but I believe that his ability to sell a second-rate transport system is somewhat tested here. Will he tell Londoners how it can be fair and right that they should have the most expensive urban transport system in Europe while having to maintain it with the lowest level of subsidy in western europe? Why is that the case? Why does everyone else do it differently?

Mr. Norris: I am not sure that my ability or anyone else's in selling the advantages of London is ever helped by the carping from Opposition Members which is so often devoid of any positive criticism of the system. Such carping is not helpful in any way; it is in no one's interests. The Government are right to believe that either the taxpayer or the user pays. Operators certainly welcome the fact that they can recover 90 per cent. of their operating costs through the fare box. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, with his experience of the Greater London council, understands that these days when taxpayers invest in improving the system every pound that they spend goes into improvements rather than merely into subsidising operating costs.

Rail Privatisation

10. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from private operators who may wish to bid for running rail franchises.

Mr. MacGregor: We have received expressions of interest from more than 70 prospective private sector operators and British Rail management bid teams interested in operating franchised passenger services.

Mr. Bruce: My right hon. Friend's answer is in stark contrast with the view of the doom and gloom merchants in the Opposition who seem to suggest that nobody will want to run our rail services. Will my right hon. Friend encourage management buy-outs and franchisees who wish to extend our rail system to more freight and more passengers than are carried by British Rail?

Mr. MacGregor: Yes, certainly we are keen to encourage management-employee teams to bid for franchises in competition with all others who are bidding. We have had more than 20 expressions of interest from management-employee teams. I regard that as an extremely encouraging sign. I know that there is a great deal of interest among them. My hon. Friend is also right to say that we shall encourage passenger franchisees to extend their services as well as to meet the commitments in the contracts. Freight will be different because they will not be bidding for franchises. However, I believe that there is a great deal of interest in our proposals for the freight sector. I am confident that our proposals, combined with my recent announcements about three freight proposals, are the best way to try to achieve a halt in the decline of freight on rail and to bring about a shift from road to rail.

Mr. Olner: The Minister must surely realise that without substantial investment in BR, particularly on signalling and rolling stock, no franchisees who are attracted will do the job correctly. When did the Minister last travel on the west coast line to see just how dilapidated are the track, the signalling and the rolling stock? The Minister must do better, get out of his complacent mood and do something about our railways before they disappear completely.

Mr. MacGregor: There is no complacency. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that there has been substantial investment in recent years in very many parts of the country. I have said that it is not possible to do everything at once. For example, very recently a £40 million contract was announced for investment in signalling on the London to Tilbury and Southend line. Investment is taking place on a substantial scale. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there needs to be continuing investment and I believe that our proposals will achieve that.

Mr. Cormack: Has anyone at all expressed interest in taking over the west coast line? What comfort can my right hon. Friend offer my constituents who will soon have longer journeys to London than they have had hitherto? That is a totally unacceptable situation.

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot disclose those bids that are commercially confidential and at this stage, as my hon. Friend will recognise, most of them are. I recognise that there have been marginal differences in the timetable on some aspects of the west coast main line, reflecting to some extent the position in relation to some of the signalling. I have indicated that BR is currently considering that. However, the changes in the timetable are very small indeed.

Mr. Prescott: What is the right hon. Gentleman's estimate of the subsidies for such franchises in the first and second years? Will he assure the House that the finances for the payment of those subsidies will not come from the £4 billion surplus that he has seen in the British Rail pension fund, as that would constitute the greatest rail robbery in history and would be bitterly opposed in the House?

Mr. MacGregor: I cannot, of course, say what the subsidy will be for the first two years as that will be part of the public expenditure negotiations in the autumn. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman recognises that. However, I am glad to respond to the hon. Gentleman's second point. I give him a complete assurance that in no way would we countenance—and certainly in no way would I countenance—the BR pension scheme fund being used for purposes other than for paying BR pensioners. I give the hon. Gentleman that assurance—*[Interruption]* Yes, in relation to the total fund. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will join me in trying to stop the mischievous and unwarranted scares that I encountered in Swindon on

Friday, when I was very happy to give that assurance to the petitioner there who came to see me about it. Such scares are totally unfair to the pensioners and I hope that they will stop.

Disabled People (Travel)

11. **Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department will take to facilitate travel by the disabled in London.

Mr. Norris: My Department's disability unit works closely with the unit for disabled passengers at London Transport in promoting accessible transport services. Dial-a-ride services in London are funded by my Department and administered on our behalf by London Transport. We shall be announcing shortly the funding levels for 1993-94. In addition, there is a requirement for all London taxis to be wheelchair accessible by 1 January 2000.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: My constituents will be grateful for, and reassured by, my hon. Friend's answer. As we so often hear Opposition Members knocking London's record, will my hon. Friend draw a comparison with cities comparable with London and our record in the matter? So that we can see what the Opposition did when they were in power, will he also draw a comparison with what the Greater London council did under Labour control?

Mr. Norris: I think that it is fair to say that while we can and will do more, London offers on balance the best transport service for disabled people of any major city in the world. To emphasise that point, it is partly because by increasing our funding by a further £1·5 million this year we have achieved a real increase of more than 60 per cent. compared with the last year in which the service was funded by the GLC.

Ms. Walley: Is the Minister aware that today is International Women's Day and that many women, especially disabled women, all over the country do not have access to public transport? During the six months of the United Kindom's presidency, why did the Government not take further the European directive on the mobility of disabled workers?

Will the Minister give an assurance that, whatever his proposals for the future of black cabs and private hire vehicles in London, there will be no threat whatever that access to disabled people will be lost? He should bear in mind that there is a real chance that black cabs could well be put out of business if he does not deal with the whole issue properly?

Mr. Norris: The hon. Lady will appreciate that women, especially disabled women, are uppermost in the Department's mind when it considers what steps to take to provide disabled access to transport. As I said, those steps are more advanced in London in terms of buses, access to rail systems and especially taxis and other forms of personal transport than in any other major city in the world.

I merely reiterate that the Department requires all London taxis to be fully accessible to the disabled by the year 2000. The hon. Lady should know that some 7,000 taxis are available for disabled people to hire from the street. I am committed to the proposition that we should continue with that policy and have all London taxis accessible to the disabled by the year 2000.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science Budget

29. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was the size of the science budget 1978-79; and what it will be in 1993-94, at comparable prices.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): The science budget in 1978-79 was £800 million at 1993-94 prices. The planned expenditure in 1993-94 will be £1,165 million. After taking account of changes in departmental responsibilities, the figures on a comparable basis are £827 million and £1,040 million, which gives a real-terms increase of 25·8 per cent.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that excellent reply. Can he, in the real-terms increase in the science budget for the coming year, underline the Government's commitment to supporting British science and technology? Is he aware that the Agricultural and Food Research Council will be able to undertake much valuable research work as a result of the settlement?

Mr. Waldegrave: I know that my hon. Friend makes a contribution as a member of the Agricultural and Food Research Council, and that is valuable. I greatly admire the Agricultural and Food Research Council, which has taken difficult decisions recently. It has reorganised its work and is now doing internationally acclaimed work both in basic areas such as molecular biology and applied work such as the work that it has done on bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

Dr. Bray: Does the Chancellor agree with the Agricultural and Food Research Council that the figures for 1994 to 1996 represent a cut in previously planned totals and that that will mean cuts in terms of its programmes?

Mr. Waldegrave: As the hon. Gentleman knows, I published all this advice to meet some of the justified demands for more information on these matters. I do not deny that the previous plans were higher before the recession hit—we should all like to spend more on some of these important programmes—but we got a real-terms increase this year which we are protecting in the years following and which is good against the present background.

Sir Giles Shaw: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although the total may be arguable, what is important is the distribution of that money within the sciences and the technological programmes that we want to see continued? Does he expect not only to address that matter in his White Paper but perhaps to indicate whether defence science will be lower and civil sciences will be higher?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with the implication of what my hon. Friend said. This year, total civil research and development by the Government has increased faster than the science budget—by about 2 per cent. That represents a proper balance of priorities.

Ms. Mowlam: Is it not hypocritical, on International Women's Day, to create a committee to look at discrimination against women scientists at the same time as women civil servants are having their jobs contracted out to the private sector and he is unable to ensure that the benefits of equal opportunities apply to both the public and the private sectors?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady should have welcomed the fact that the chief scientific adviser, with my strong support, has launched a campaign to bring more women into science and engineering. I am sorry that she does not welcome that fact.

Mr. Mans: How does our current expenditure on civil research and development compare with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average?

Mr. Waldegrave: We are above the average for the OECD countries in our total spend on civil research and development. Hon. Members on both sides of the House might be forgiven for forgetting that fact in the barrage of somewhat selective statistics sometimes produced by Opposition Members.

Charters

30. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many charters have specific reference to the needs of disabled people.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. Robert Jackson): The charter calls on all public services to make sure that services are accessible to all their customers and clients. Twenty-five charters make specific reference to people with disabilities.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister recognise that many disabled people still feel that decisions are taken for them, without involving them, by people who think that they know what is best for them but are not necessarily always right? Will he ensure that there is more involvement of disabled people and that the private Member's legislation enacted some years ago to extend facilities to disabled people is fully implemented?

Mr. Jackson: First, I acknowledge the hon. Gentleman's concern for people with disabilities. I recently wrote to him after he came to see me on behalf of a constituent about the provision of information for people with disabilities about the citizens charter. I hope that I was able to satisfy him that we are taking steps to meet his concern. The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point about the need to bear in mind the interests of people with disabilities in constructing charters. We thought long and hard about the idea of special charters for special groups, but we decided that the right approach was to ensure that all the various clients and customers of public services are taken into account in framing charters. We endeavour to make sure that the interests of people with disabilities are taken fully into account in that context.

Mr. Lidington: Is my hon. Friend aware that British Rail's policy of phasing out the use of barrow crossings is causing problems and reducing the opportunities of wheelchair users, including many such people who travel to Stoke Mandeville spinal injuries unit and the Ludwig Gutmanne stadium in my constituency? Could he please have a word with the chairman of British Rail to see whether other means are available to restore the opportunities of wheelchair users to travel freely?

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend makes an interesting point. I shall have to go into it. I cannot answer the point immediately, but I shall follow it up with his assistance.

Ms. Hoey: The Minister must surely agree that if citizens charters are to mean anything and have any credibility, citizens must have a right to compensation when Government services are inadequate. The operation of the disability living allowance by the Benefits Agency, for which there is a citizens charter, is clearly disgraceful. Does he realise how many people are still waiting to have their claims dealt with and will he insist that all who have suffered from the delays will be compensated?

Mr. Jackson: Of course the Government recognise the problems that have come about as a result of the introduction of disability living allowance. Some 800 extra staff have been recruited to deal with the delays. Overtime equivalent to some 300 extra staff has been undertaken. Compensation has been paid in 139 cases. There is a commitment to clear up the backlog of letters from Members of Parliament by the end of March. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is fully on top of the need to improve the position in respect of DLA.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that even more important than inclusion in charters is the level of spending on the disabled? Will he confirm that under the Conservative Government spending has doubled in real terms? While the Labour party talks, we act and get on with the job.

Mr. Jackson: My hon. Friend, as usual, is absolutely right. Spending has trebled in real terms since we came to office in 1978-79. Some £14 billion is currently being spent in support of people with disabilities.

Purchaser/Provider Split

32. **Mr. Wells:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures the Government are taking to extend the purchaser/provider split as part of their programme of public service reforms.

Mr. Waldegrave: The principle of splitting responsibility for purchasing services from that of providing them has been established in the national health service and in local authorities for a number of years. It is now being applied in central Government through the next steps initiative and market testing.

Mr. Wells: Will my right hon. Friend give the House some examples of savings from market testing and contracting out, and are the savings retained by the Department which achieves them?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can give one example that may be of interest to the House. Recent market testing by the Ministry of Defence enabled savings to be made which allowed the retention of two front-line regiments. I can confirm to my hon. Friend that the savings are retained by the Department for spending on the services that it provides.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that there is considerable and clear evidence that if the sort of market testing that he is talking about is extended, for example, to the income tax authorities, it will lead to real problems with confidentiality for our constituents? Before he rides that hobby horse off into the distance, will he consider its implications carefully?

Mr. Waldegrave: I have never understood why it is thought that only those of our fellow citizens who work in the public sector can keep proper rules of confidentiality. In national defence, for instance, defence contractors have for many years held secrets at least as sensitive as those held by any part of the public sector.

Charters

33. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is his policy towards establishing a citizens charter regarding Government posts abroad.

Mr. Waldegrave: Citizens charter principles apply to all public services, here and abroad.

Mr. Steen: Is the Chancellor of the Duchy aware that the diplomatic service overseas boasts leisure facilities on a par with those of some of the best five-star hotels, with 135 swimming pools and 81 tennis courts? Just as the hotel industry is having to consider carefully how it is run, does the Minister agree that we need to find evidence of whether tennis courts and swimming pools make the civil service leaner and fitter? If he is thinking of a charter for overseas, will he consider that permanent secretaries and their families travel first class at taxpayers' expense, and that every member of staff in the diplomatic service travels club class if they have to be on a plane for more than two and a half hours?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not find myself entirely in sympathy with my hon. Friend. I have had the privilege to be a Foreign Office Minister and I am aware of the extreme pressures under which many of our diplomatic staff work abroad. I do not think that the House would begrudge them some basic amenities.

34. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce new charters.

Mr. Robert Jackson: New charters in 1993 will cover child support, the environment, and further and higher education. Other charters, such as the parents charter, will be revised to reflect new and higher standards.

Mr. Coombs: May I prevail on my hon. Friend to encourage local authorities to undertake the production of charters, in the hope that that may do something to improve their rather poor public image? What advantage, in particular, does he see in the production of league tables so that residents can compare how their local authority performs?

Mr. Jackson: The Government do encourage local authorities to produce citizens charters and many are doing so or thinking about it. My hon. Friend refers to league tables and the Government are committed to the improvement of information about councils' performances. It is interesting to note that the other day the National Consumer Council welcomed the proposed publication of local authority league tables, which it described as
"a sea change in what people can find out about council services".
I noticed my hon. Friend's implication that such league tables are likely to show that Labour authorities provide relatively low-quality services at high cost to the public, which is no doubt why they are so hostile to the proposal.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: In drawing up his plans for future charters, will the Minister make it clear to the House how he intends to involve consumers—the citizens—in decisions about what should be contained in the charters? Concern has been expressed, not least by the National Consumer Council, that citizens are not sufficiently involved in decisions about what should be in the charters as they are drawn up by civil servants and those who operate the services, together with Ministers.

Mr. Jackson: We encourage every Department, when drawing up a charter, to conduct some sort of detailed survey of customer opinion and to consult customers when framing the survey. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not join those who question the money being spent to enable that new customer service to take place.

Mr. Churchill: Will my right hon. and hon. Friends reconsider their decision not to have a charter for the disabled? Does my hon. Friend agree that it is unacceptable that my constituents from Manchester Davyhulme and those from other constituencies should be confined to unheated guards vans for long journeys when are travelling on lines other than InterCity? Under a Conservative Government in the 1990s that is just not acceptable. Will my hon. Friend see that British Rail gets its act together and starts treating disabled people at least as well as the airlines do?

Mr. Jackson: I will certainly look at the case to which my hon. Friend refers. As to whether we should have charters for particular groups, such as people with disabilities or other special groups, I repeat what I said to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike). We thought long and hard about the idea of specialist charters, but we believe that it is better for people in special groups to be treated on an integrated basis with other customers and clients of public service organisations. In our view, it is not necessary to have a special charter for people with disabilities. Instead, when appropriate, such people should be taken into account when charters are being framed. Indeed, they are taken into account in the case of almost all charters, except where it would be inappropriate to do so.

Duchy Land

35. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the total area of land within the ownership of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Duchy owns approximately 50,000 acres of land, made up principally of 35,000 acres of agricultural land.

Mr. Skinner: Does the Minister agree that some of the money accruing from that land is part of a carefully constructed tax avoidance scheme for the Queen? Is he

satisfied—we are not—with the fact that the Queen is able to take part in this tax fiddle while any ordinary person has to pay tax——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should rephrase his question. If he wishes to make a direct criticism of any member of the royal family, he should do so by way of a substantive motion. Of course, if he rephrases his question we shall have to listen to it.

Mr. Skinner: With regard to this carefully constructed tax avoidance scheme, will the Minister bear in mind the fact that any ordinary citizen would have to pay up to seven years' back tax? For 40 years the Queen has not had to pay a penny. The least we are entitled to is seven years' back tax.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report of the royal trustees with regard to tax matters is in the Vote Office. The answer to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question is no, and to the second part yes.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that the Duchy is an outstandingly good landlord, whose tenants were delighted when, not long ago, the duke turned up for tea? Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that the Duchy fund benefits many thousands of good causes and charities throughout Lancashire and that the recipients of benefit bitterly resent Labour's constant attacks on it?

Mr. Waldegrave: As usual, my hon. Friend speaks for Lancashire. I suspect that if there were a Duchy of Yorkshire we might hear more sense from the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner).

Mr. Skinner: My constituency is in Derbyshire.

Mr. Waldegrave: Derbyshire, then.

Next Steps

36. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proportion of the civil service is now working on next steps lines.

Mr. Waldegrave: Over half of the civil service is currently working on next steps lines. This will rise to about 60 per cent. in April with the expected launch of a further group of agencies.

Mr. Milligan: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he please take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of Ordnance Survey, which employs many of my constituents, for its commitment to customer service and, in particular, for the fact that it has succeeded in computerising 230,000 maps 10 years ahead of schedule?

Mr. Waldegrave: I think that my hon. Friend is entirely right. Ordnance Survey has always been a fine organisation, but it has improved its standards markedly since it became an agency. My hon. Friend is correct in saying that it completed that magnificent programme 10 years ahead of schedule. The nation should be very proud of it.

Venture Capital

37. **Mrs Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received from industry concerning the availability of venture capital for the funding of science-based businesses.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Several of the submissions received during the White Paper consultation highlighted the importance of venture capital for innovation.

Mrs. Gillan: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. Will he accept that, recently, many science-based businesses, particularly small and medium-sized firms, have had difficulty raising finance, chiefly because of short-termism and the short-term view taken by City institutions and venture capitalists? Can he give some assurances and perhaps encourage the City to look more carefully at the small and medium-sized businesses whose activities are based on science, as it is from such businesses that the recovery in this country will come?

Mr. Jackson: There is interesting evidence from the British Venture Capital Association and its constituent companies, showing an increase in the level of support to science-based businesses from 14·3 per cent. of the business of its members in 1989 to 18 per cent. in 1991.

I appreciate the spirit of my hon. Friend's question, but the allegation about short-termism in capital markets is one which is often made but has never been demonstrated. The key point that is often overlooked is the importance of interest rates. In this country, we have tended to have relatively higher interest rates than elsewhere, particularly the United States and Japan. The achievement in reducing interest rates will help the situation. Meanwhile, the Government have acted to promote proper reporting by companies of their research and development efforts.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you know, the Opposition parties have been told to expect a Government statement tomorrow on the "taking stock" proposals for Scotland. However, I understand that the editors of certain Scottish newspapers have had a closed briefing on the contents of that statement at some point today. Many is the time that I have heard you deprecate the practice of briefings taking place in the morning before a Government statement. It would be quite extraordinary if such a briefing took place 24 hours before Members of this House have had a chance to analyse the contents of a Government Command Paper.

We are told to expect 50 pages in this document. By the usual practice, we shall receive it at 3.30 tomorrow and we will have to ask questions straight away. Perhaps, Madam Speaker, the document and the proposals have been leaked so much that there will be nothing left in the bucket. It may turn out to be the biggest damp squib since Guy Fawkes. It would be a tremendous discourtesy to the House if this briefing has taken place. I note that the Leader of the House is in his place on the Government Front Bench and perhaps, with your intervention, we might have some clarification and the Government could confirm or deny whether such a briefing took place today.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. I, too, have heard that complaint levelled this morning by a journalist in Scotland. If we are to receive such a hefty document, would it be possible to place it on the Board some 30 minutes before the Secretary of State comes to make his statement?

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. As I understand it, that briefing has been given by a Minister of the Crown, not just by officials. That in itself should be of some concern to you. I notice that, in addition to the Leader of the House, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland is also on the Treasury Bench. He might be able to elucidate whether the fourth estate has been given advance notice of what we expect to hear tomorrow.

Madam Speaker: I remind the House that the point of order is to me.

There is nothing new about Government documents and statements being embargoed, but I would regard it as a great discourtesy to the House if there had been an extensive unembargoed briefing of the sort to which the hon. Members have referred. In recent weeks, there have been more leaks from papers and more statements than there are holes in my kitchen colander. I would deprecate very much statements and heavy briefing of the nature that has been raised on the Floor of the House today. I regard this Chamber as supreme. Any statements that have to be made should be made here in the first instance. [HON. MEMBERS: "Answer."] Order. I began by saying that the points of order were to me as Speaker. I have to respond to them and I have done so. This is a long-awaited statement and I have no idea when I shall be in the Chair to deal with such a statement, but I look forward to it enormously.

Statutory Instruments, &c

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

COUNCIL TAX (SCOTLAND)

That the Council Tax (Transitional Reduction Scheme) (Scotland) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 277) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (SUPERANNUATION)

That the Local Government Superannuation (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 366) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

SEA FISHERIES

That the Sea Fishing (Enforcement of Community Quota Measures) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 387) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Loch Crinan Scallops Fishery Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 177) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Question agreed to.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 4 March]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

Amendment proposed [4 March]: in page 1, line 9, after 'II', to insert the words

'(except Article 138d on page 42 of Cm 1934)'.—*[Mr. George Robertson]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I remind the Committee that we are also considering the following: amendment No. 33, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 158 on page 44 of Cm 1934 relating to the appointment of the Commission).'.

Amendment No. 34, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(with the proviso that the Government of the United Kingdom shall before the nomination of persons they intend to appoint as members of the Commission seek the approval of the House of Commons to the nomination of those persons).'.

Amendment No. 99, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 146 on page 43 of Cm 1934 which relates to the Composition of the Council of Ministers)'.

Amendment No. 168, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 8d on page 12 of Cm 1934)'.

Amendment No. 221, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 189c(a) on page 52 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 222, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 189c(e) on page 52 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 235, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 138b'.

Amendment No. 236, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 138e'.

Amendment No. 393, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 138(c) as referred to in Article G on page 42 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 394, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 147 as referred to in Article G on page 43 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 395, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 151 as referred to in Article G on page 43 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 396, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 159 as referred to in Article G on page 45 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 397, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 160 as referred to in Article G on page 45 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 398, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 175 as referred to in Article G on page 47 of Command Paper number 1934'.

Amendment No. 430, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert (except Article 157(2) on page 44 of Cm. 1934 relating to the independence of members of the Commission).'.

Amendment No. 19, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Article 10, Clause 2 on pages 60 and 61 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 21 in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Article 9 on page 60 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 22, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Article 10 on page 60 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 23, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Article 20a on page 62 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 24, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Article 20b on page 62 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 25, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Article 20d on page 62 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 26, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Chapter V on page 65 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 136, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert 'except paragraph 3 of Article 21'.

Amendment No. 137, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert 'except Article 20d'.

Amendment No. 410, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Articles 7 to 17 on pages 60 to 62 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 413, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert '(except Articles 20a and 24 on pages 62 to 63 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 141, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert 'except paragraph 3 of Article 108'.

Amendment No. 142, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert 'except Article 170d'.

Amendment No. 414, in page 1, line 9 after 'IV', insert '(except Articles 107 a-c on pages 69 and 70 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 417, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert '(except Articles 160 a-c on pages 74 to 76 of Cm 1934).'.

Amendment No. 55, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 137 in Title II thereof'.

Amendment No. 143, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not paragraph 3 of Article 21 in Title III thereof'.

Amendment No. 144, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not the second paragraph of Article 24 in Title III thereof'.

Amendment No. 148, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 107a in Title IV thereof'.

Amendment No. 219, in page 1, line 10 after '1992', insert

'but not Article 189a(2) on page 50 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 220, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 189b on pages 51 and 52 of Cm 1934'.

Amendment No. 285, in page 1, line 14, leave out subsection (2).

Amendment No. 426, in page 1, line 17, at end add

'with the proviso that Article 138(3) is fully implemented in the United Kingdom before the fourth direct elections to the European Parliament.'.

New clause 1—*Rejection of common position*—

'(1) Where, in pursuance of Article 189b of the Treaty of Union, Paragraph 2 (c) or (d) of that Article, the European Parliament has given notice that it intends to reject the common position of the Council of Ministers of the Community, Her Majesty's Government shall lay before Parliament in a Command Paper an account of the Commission proposal and the view of Her Majesty's Government concerning that proposal the reasons for the Council common position, its reaction to any proposal of the European Parliament, and any subsequent proceedings of the Conciliation Committee and subsequent events provided for in the Article.

(2) Any Report shall include reference to any United Kingdom parliamentary proceeding related to that proposal and may include matter relating to more than one proposal.'.

3.34 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): When I was last speaking on the treaty, I was interrupted by the 10 o'clock motion. I had been talking about the growing bureaucracy in Europe being duplicated, both there and here. I said that additional powers in Europe normally tended to mean the diminution of United Kingdom powers.

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

I say to my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and other Ministers: many Conservative Members feel sincerely about the problems in Europe. We think that Ministers would do themselves more credit if they argued their case for the benefit of the country and ceased to denigrate Back Benchers who have individual views.

It is important that we should deal with the matters as we find them, and the European institutions such as the European Parliament. There seems to be a cleavage between the views of those who have read the treaty and those who have bothered to go through the clauses one by one.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for showing his characteristic courtesy and giving way. Did he read yesterday's edition of the *Observer*, particularly the article by the grand old Conservative Lord Blake, who argued the case for a referendum from a Conservative perspective? Does the hon. Gentleman agreee with Lord Blake's view?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I did not read the *Observer* yesterday, but if the hon. Gentleman would like my view on a referendum, may I say how wise it would be——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman must stick to the subject of European institutions.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Perhaps I should change my response to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), as I have been checked by the Chair—yes, I do.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): My hon. Friend said that he wished that more people would read the treaty, as they could come to only one conclusion. The division in the House is between those who believe that what is in the treaty will happen and those who do not believe that. Those who believe that what is in the treaty will happen are against it.

Sir Trevor Skeet: If one reads the treaty carefully and takes a long-term view, one reaches a conclusion about precisely what will happen. Many people who take a short-term view will get the wrong end of the stick. It was not surprising that, when the Minister of State sought the opinion of his Department, he was given one version, and when he went to the Attorney-General, he received another. I am sorry that I cannot pursue that subject further, as I shall be ruled out of order. I shall return to the subject of the institutions.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Is not my hon. Friend sad that some of the Ministers and others who hurl abuse at men of integrity and principle like my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), are never here to listen to the arguments about the treaty when they are advanced in Committee, which is conducted under a splendid Chairmanship?

Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be much better if, instead of trying to negotiate scrappy and nasty deals with minority parties in smoke-filled rooms, more of the so-called tiny band of Euro-hitmen in the Government would come to our debates and listen to the arguments? Instead, they engage in dreadful bogus deals with minority parties, in which they have to try to stand on their heads. As my hon. Friend rightly said, we should have a referendum.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I agree with my hon. Friend. My simple point was that Ministers should take the arguments to the country and argue them before the country, so that everyone can hear the debates, and that they should not simply argue about matters in the Chamber and reach general conclusions.

As for the European Parliament, certain co-operation procedures have been in operation, and they have been greatly extended under the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty. These procedures are fairly complicated, as is article 189b.

I am thinking of the negative assent procedure, the information procedure, and the budget procedure under article 206. With the completion of the single market on 1 January 1993, the volume of co-operation procedure legislation will be sharply reduced, so it would be desirable to assign further pieces of legislation to this category. Although I am not encouraged by a great increase in the powers of the European Parliament, I believe that it should enjoy a balanced position, and this is the only way of achieving that.

The European Parliament still cannot initiate legislation; that is the sole prerogative of the Commission and of the Council of Ministers. The powers of the Commission have not been reduced, and there is no prospect of their being reduced. The democratic deficit will remain for many years to come.

Having looked at article 189b, I have come to the conclusion that it is far too complicated to work. If the treaty is to be revised in 1996, it would be a good idea if those who revise it carefully looked at this matter again to determine whether more of a controlling influence would be had over the Commission, which is the cause of many of the troubles.

Mr. Marlow: I apologise for interrupting again, but is it not an essential ingredient of good government that people should understand how they are being governed? Anyone looking at article 189b or article 189c would throw up his hands in horror and not have the vaguest idea of what was being done to him.

Sir Trevor Skeet: In the House of Commons, we pass legislation through various stages; that is not done in the European Parliament. It has only a right of veto. That veto may be exercised only over legislation that falls into a defined set of categories—outside them, it does not operate at all. It is a well known fact—it is an admitted fact—that the Commission is a non-elected body. The Council of Ministers is appointed by the Governments of the member states. So between the two, the people have little say.

Before we concede any additional powers, should we not ensure that the people have their say on matters that are indispensible to the future of this country?

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): As one of the small minority of pro-Europeans in the Chamber today, may I ask the hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Pro-Common Market —there is a difference.

Mr. Dalyell: Yes.

Would the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) accept that the European Parliament is rather better at monitoring what it has done and the money that

it has given out than is the House of Commons? We are in no position to lecture that Parliament on the monitoring of legislation or of what happens to the money.

Sir Trevor Skeet: But we have several Committees to monitor these things, and they do remarkably good work. This House has many years of experience of these matters, and some of the Select Committees are quite capable of handling them. We should remember that the European system is of a European type, which is rather different from our own. Certainly, it is up to European standards, but the European Parliament has had a short life by contrast with the centuries of experience behind this place.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Would the hon. Gentleman like to remind the Committee that, although the work of the Court of Auditors is excellent, it is limited? Does he agree that, when the work of the Public Accounts Committee is set against the work of any of the European institutions, it becomes painfully clear that, far from there being proper auditing, not hundreds of pounds but hundreds of thousands of pounds are wasted by European institutions?

Sir Trevor Skeet: We are aware not only of the waste of money in Europe but of the big mountains of agricultural produce. We are also worried by the amount of fraud in certain parts of Europe.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): In view of the point made by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) no doubt my hon. Friend will welcome the provisions of the Maastricht treaty to strengthen the powers of the Court of Auditors and formally to make it an institution of the Community.

3.45 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet: Shall we not have an extraordinary system? We shall have checks in the United Kingdom and in Europe, and we shall be over-governed by all those additions. Why not continue with the existing, thorough arrangements? Over time, there could be more Select Committees and not simply a check on legislation covering a vast range of subjects and coming from other people.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am afraid that I cannot allow my hon. Friend, or the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich, to have it both ways. I agree that, regrettably, there is fraud in the European Community, but surely the Court of Auditors being formally made an institution of the Community and being given further powers to investigate such fraud should be welcomed.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does not the Minister agree that the United Kingdom is known for the purity of its operations? I have been in Parliament for about 26 years, and I do not think that I have discovered a single case of fraud. In the European Parliament, and in some of the European institutions that have been built up, there is evidence of fraud—in Greece and Italy and elsewhere. I do not know how my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) can smile at that, because he knows perfectly well that it exists.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): It was a modest smile. Every report of the Court of Auditors, year in and year out, emphasises that there is fraud in every member state, including the United Kingdom, over the operation of the CAP and other matters.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): May I ask my hon. Friend about this question——

The Chairman: Order. We cannot have an intervention on an intervention.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I have listened attentively to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East. He and I have roughly the same experience of Parliament. He says that there are illustrations of fraud here, but I have not discovered any. One cannot say that about the European institutions which we are being invited to join.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Would my hon. Friend explain to the Minister of State that, while greater powers of inquiry and the principle of a European institution are to be granted to the Court of Auditors, it will still have absolutely no power of any sort to do anything apart from publishing its annual report? Does my hon. Friend appreciate that the Government do not seem to take those reports very seriously, because this week, as my hon. Friend is aware, we shall discuss the latest annual report for an hour and a half after midnight on Wednesday?

Will my hon. Friend make it clear to the Minister of State that, although there is a vast amount of shameful, scandalous and shocking fraud, the Court of Auditors has no power: it can only publish its reports and seek views on them? Those views are usually disregarded, especially by the Government, who will have them discussed for an hour and a half after midnight.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am obliged to my hon. Friend.

Is not the trouble precisely that we have not uncovered fraud? I have experience of the Public Acounts Committee and the sub-committee of the Budget Committee of the indirectly elected European Parliament, which was responsible for such matters. Along with Martin Bangemann, who was then an MEP, and others, we turned our attention to fraud. We did so, often in difficult circumstances, in respect of Italy.

Something was done years before the issue would have been examined by the Public Accounts Committee. At least such incidents are dealt with reasonably currently. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) does a splendid job, but his Committee examines only cases that arose many moons ago, by which time nothing can be done. At least the European Parliament can attempt to take some action.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I have listened carefully to the hon. Gentleman's comments, but I do not want to be taken too far down that path. It will be apparent from the record that we have a good reputation. Many of the other European countries will say what they will do and then ignore the result, and allow checking by the Commission at a later stage. Our attitude towards government and the law is one of respect and compliance.

Mr. Marlow: Newspaper reports appearing in the past few days make it apparent that there is a European policy on sanctions against Serbia, yet arms, petrol and other supplies are flooding into Serbia through Greece—which is a member of the Community. Institutions and policies

[Mr. Marlow]

already exist to stop Greece permitting that. The treaty contains more institutional powers that will supposedly prevent Greece allowing such a thing in future.

How optimistic is my hon. Friend that those powers will be effective with regard to Greece? If a similar problem applied to the United Kingdom, how effective would those powers be with regard to the United Kingdom? Would it be a level playing field?

Sir Trevor Skeet: Yes. My hon. Friend is perfectly right, but I cannot pursue that aspect because we shall be debating title V, article J, later, in relation to foreign policy and defence. The article leaks like a sieve and will continue to do so.

Extraordinarily enough, the Commission has the exclusive right to initiate legislation. It can modify its proposals before they are presented by the Council of Ministers, and thwart the European Parliament under article 189b. I am only left in doubt as to the full extent of the functioning of the Conciliation Committee. Will it not add to a particular complication?

The Commission will also have special powers under the pillars that are outside the treaty. It will be an enormously powerful body—much more powerful than the House of Commons, because it will be Europewide in its application.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Will my hon. Friend describe the powers that the Commission will have under the pillars that it does not already enjoy in relation to intergovernmental activity—such as European political co-operation.

Sir Trevor Skeet: The Commission has a right to be fully informed about and to take an interest in both articles J and K. It has a right to settle legislation, if legislation is to be agreed. It will have a right to carry that legislation out, by convention or other methods.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If my hon. Friend examines the Commission's position in relation to European political co-operation, which is the governmental activity that currently exists under the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act, he will find that the Commission already has those powers. What are the enormous new powers to which my hon. Friend refers?

Sir Trevor Skeet: Under article 100c, the Commission has powers, by convention, to carry things through—but these all come out of the fact that they are an addition to the powers that the Commission could normally utilise, not simply under the treaty of Rome. It could now use them under the pillars that are being established.

My right hon. Friend the Minister and other Ministers have claimed that, as the pillars are outside the treaty, they are also outside the European Court and the Commission. That is certainly not true.

Mr. Garel-Jones: What I am saying is that the Commission has no new powers in, for example, the intergovernmental pillar relating to interior justice. I believe that the wording of the treaty is "fully associated with", but those words are lifted from the provisions in the Single European Act that established existing practice for European political co-operation. My hon. Friend tells us that the Commission has a huge range of new powers; I am asking him to tell the Committee what they are. So far, he has not done so.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I very much want to come on to that, but I fear that articles J and K are beyond the remit of our debate. I should like to be led into such a discussion, however, so that I could explain to the Minister that the Commission has substantial powers, and that Ministers have not been frank with the country in saying that some of those powers are entirely outside the provisions of the treaty.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has quite properly been preparing for other aspects of the debate, but this is to do with the powers of the Commission. Article K.3(2) states that the European Council may,

"on the initiative of . . . the commission, in the areas referred to in Article K.1(1) to (6) . . . adopt joint positions and promote".

The Commission has a great deal of power within that article, although the Government have said that it has not. If my hon. Friend has time to read it in detail later, he will be alarmed at the massive power of initiation that the Commission will have in the areas of justice and home affairs.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am obliged to my hon. Friend, but I am familiar with that article. Under sub-paragraph (2), the Council may "draw up conventions", after adopting "joint action", and may even stipulate that reference can be made to the European Court of Justice, which will settle the matter. The Minister knows that that is so.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Perhaps my hon. Friend should ask the Minister of State to read the treaty. He may be in grave danger of finding himself in the same position as the Home Secretary. Notwithstanding the various discussions in which he has engaged, the Minister should be prepared to listen, and to examine article K.9. That article allows specific policy areas, such as immigration and fraud, to be transferred to the remit of the treaty through the extension of the application of article 100c of the treaty establishing the Community.

My hon. Friend should advise the Minister to stop making silly interjections, to read the treaty and to appreciate that, by extending the provisions of article 100c in that context, we are making a substantial change. Does my hon. Friend agree that, by bringing whole new areas of policy into intergovernmental agreement, we are extending the Commission's powers specifically, clearly, and in terms of the treaty that the Government have signed?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am obliged to my hon. Friend. It is clear that the Minister of State has not read the treaty closely.

Mr. Garel-Jones *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: The Minister rises again, and he will be thrust down again. Ministers must read the treaty extremely carefully to find out what it actually says. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—whom I support——

Mr. Skinner: Not very often.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I do support my right hon. Friend. He has been telling the country that the pillars make a very big

change: they are outside the European Court and the Commission. I consider that quite wrong, because they are inside for certain specific purposes.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I promise him and the Committee that I shall not try to intervene on him again. I respectfully submit that, were I to intervene every time he needed to be corrected, we should not make much progress.

In seeking to support my hon. Friend's argument that the treaty gives the Commission enormous new powers in the intergovernmental area, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) tried to talk about the transfer of competences from article K to article 100c. As a close student of the treaty, my hon. Friend will know that, for any such transfer to occur, the member states must first agree to the proposition. The Commission is not a member state, and therefore has no vote. It must then be agreed by the parliament of every member state.

Therefore, far from getting new powers, the ability of the Commission to obtain new powers, which my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) sought to illustrate, is entirely dependent on the unanimous vote of the parliaments of all 12 member states.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Is it in order for the Minister to predict inaccuracies, as he sees them, in the future speech of an hon. Member?

The Chairman: That is not a matter for the Chair. The Minister is responsible for his own views.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am not impressed by what the Minister says. He is talking about the contemporary position. I was told that a certain result would follow from the Single European Act. Many of us were let down by the advice that we were given. My right hon. Friend the Minister is wrong: all the current trends are towards majority voting. How long will unanimity last? The Commission will shortly be involved in other operations, by which time we will have lost a freedom that we shall never be able to get back.

4 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Gentleman referred to the pillars and the trunk. Many of us believe that there is no separation and that it is all one edifice—the union. Indeed, article E of title I gives us that impression. Will he draw Conservative Members' attention to article J.8, which deals with a common foreign affairs policy and which states:

"Any Member State or the Commission may refer to the Council any question relating to the common foreign and security policy and may submit proposals to the Council."

That is not the European Council——

Mr. Garel-Jones: As now.

Mr. Spearing: Under this treaty, it will be able to submit proposals not only to the European Council but to the Council of Ministers—an institution of the present market that would become part of the union.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am much obliged for that intervention.

The Minister should put his ideas before the country in a referendum, from which he would learn that the British people have their doubts and want clarification.

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: No. I shall proceed for a moment. We shall shortly debate this article under foreign policy, at which time it can be argued extensively. It would be wrong if I went further down that road.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The Minister said that there was no provision in the treaty to extend powers, but article K.9 is specific, and we should worry about it, because it transfers responsibility for immigration and fraud to the EC. That may require a unanimous vote, but, sadly, many unanimous decisions are taken as part of horse trading.

Instead of trying to trap my hon. Friend, quite wrongly and unsuccessfully, it would have been more helpful if the Minister had informed the Committee of the huge dangers in article K.9—which I am afraid he did not mention at all.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. The Minister has intervened on the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) about half a dozen times. It is becoming apparent, post-Harrogate, that the Tory party and the Government do not have an answer, and that nobody believes what the Minister says about the common market and Maastricht.

Would it not be more sensible to halt proceedings so that the Attorney-General could be brought here? Let us have some more new legal advice. There is no point in listening to the Minister when we know that he gets it continually wrong. It would be a good idea if we packed up the proceedings, got fresh legal advice and then started afresh.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I must rule on one point of order at a time.

The hon. Gentleman's good advice is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I hold the mirror image position of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I agree with him about the presence of Ministers. Do you recollect that, during previous debates on European matters, at least the Solicitor-General, the then right hon. and learned Member for Reigate, was constantly in attendance to offer his expertise? We also frequently saw the Foreign Secretary and other senior Ministers.

What better occupation do the Law Officers of the Crown and the Foreign Secretary have than to come to the House of Commons at this juncture to help the Minister of State, who has unprecedentedly made declarations about his own future? I agree with my hon. Friend that it is deeply unsatisfactory for the business to be handled in this way, and that we at least deserve the presence of the Foreign Secretary. What better things has he to do?

The Chairman: I am sure that members of the Treasury Bench will have heard the hon. Gentleman, but he will know that it is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. You will be aware that, when we held very important debates on the Single European Act, the House was given assurances by the Government that it would be able to maintain its competence over immigration policy and such issues as the working week. However, that has proved not to be the case.

[Mr. Marlow]

We are now receiving assurances from those on the Government Front Bench about the meaning of the treaty, but, similarly, they might be wrong. I agree that it would be in everyone's interest, now and in the long term, to have permanent legal advice available in the Chamber, especially while we are discussing the powers of European institutions. It is a matter of controversy, and it is important that we should be able to ask those who can best give us the answers.

The Chairman: Again, that is not a matter for the Chair, and I do not think that it needed a point of order twice as long as that of the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I appreciate that this may not strictly be a matter for you, Mr. Morris, but it is a matter for the Committee whether we are going to get correct information, especially from the legal point of view, about the complex matters being debated. The Minister of State has intervened repeatedly on his hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) in order to give him information. I was under the impression that the House was to be assisted fairly frequently by the Attorney-General. I do not recollect seeing him here yet, although we are reaching a complex stage at which his help might be necessary.

May I remind you, Mr. Morris, of a letter sent two weeks ago by the Prime Minister to my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition? The Prime Minister said:

"If the House of Commons wishes to have further advice on the meaning and effect of the Bill, Law Officers will be present when the Committee Stage of the Bill resumes. I believe that this is the right way to proceed, consistent with established practice and to ensure that the House of Commons has available to it the advice it may need."

Surely the Attorney-General or another Law Officer should be here when we need them, especially while we are debating such complex matters.

The Chairman: I suggest that we hear from the Minister of State.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If you will allow me, Mr. Morris, and if it will help the Committee, I can confirm that my right hon. and learned Friend is available to the Committee. If the Committee wishes to put a specific legal point to the Government, he will make himself available immediately.

Mr. Robertson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Morris. I appreciate your problem, and I admire your forbearance. The Minister, on a point of order, is articulating a novel constitutional arrangement. How will it be procedurally possible for us to say that we wish to have a point answered if the Attorney-General is not present? The Minister is not here on the basis of listening and then enunciating what has been said. He is present, and he has chosen to intervene in many speeches as the debate has proceeded.

If the Committee needs the valued opinion of the Attorney-General on a point, how precisely are we to bring to your attention, Mr. Morris, the fact that we want to hear his opinion? How can he be involved in the debate without some notice being given to him?

The Chairman: I have already ruled that the Treasury Bench is occupied. Presumably it is listening, and presumably it will act. There is certainly nothing further that the Chair can do other than to emphasise those three points again.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I hope that these are new points of order.

Mr. Dalyell: You raised the subject of the Treasury bench being occupied, Mr. Morris. The fact is that the Treasury Bench is not fully occupied. Not since the late Dick Crossman was left completely alone by his colleagues on the reform of the Lords has a Minister been so deserted on the Treasury Bench. We all know that the previous occasion was caused because the Government of the time decided that they did not like the proposals for reform of the Lords. That is why Dick Crossman was left alone.

We have a very lonely Minister here; apart from him, the Treasury Bench is unoccupied. Those of us who are pro-European think that it is high time that it was occupied, to give the expertise necessary for the answers to the legitimate questions being asked by hon. Members from all points of view.

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that the Government are indivisible.

Several Hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I shall take no more of the same points of order.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I want to ask the Chair a question on a point of order.

The Chairman: I hope that it is not on the same issue.

Mr. Walker: I assure you, Mr. Morris, that my point of order is a matter with which, I judge, you should be able to deal.

The Chairman: Is it on the same issue?

Mr. Walker: No. My point of order covers the conduct of the Committee.

The Chairman: I shall trust in the hon. Gentleman's honour.

Mr. Walker: Is there any point in the proceedings at which you, as Chairman, can make a judgment that the Committee is not being given the assistance required to carry out its duties properly? If so, at what point do you intervene?

Mr. Spearing: On a new point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: It may be an entirely new point of order. However, the hon. Gentleman must allow me to deal with the present point of order.

The Chair has to listen to the debate. The Chair has no responsibility for statements made by any hon. Members as long as they are in order.

Mr. Spearing: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I hope that this is an entirely new issue.

Mr. Spearing: My point of order concerns a new procedural issue, Mr. Morris. Of course we accept that you have no responsibility for anything said by any hon.

Member in this place as long as it is in order. I also accept that you have no responsibility for any statement by any Minister who, as you have stated, is indivisible from the Government.

We have had a certain undertaking, to which I shall not refer, relating to advice from Ministers who are present to answer in this debate. In the opinion of certain hon. Members, that advice has not been shown to be effective.

In those circumstances, in view of the disagreement on a matter of interpretation of the treaty between the Minister and the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), and as no reply has been given about that undertaking, about which we all know, may I have your permission to move that we report progress so that we can discuss the matter until such information is available?

The Chairman: No, I am not prepared to accept that.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Mr. Morris.

The Chairman: I ask Sir Trevor Skeet to proceed.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I find that the next six groups of amendments all contain legal technicalities, because they cover subjects such as institutions, subsidiarity, the Court of Justice, the European system of central banks, the banking system, economic policy and deficits, and economic and monetary union.

All those amendments, including the group headed "Foreign and Security" relating to article J, require the attention of the Attorney-General. It would be a happy compromise, as all hon. Members in the Chamber would agree, if the Attorney-General were to sit through all those debates, as they are of a technical nature.

I should make a little progress, because I hope that the Whips will take note of my suggestion. It is important that we should receive the correct advice. I do not blame my right hon. Friend the Minister of State: he is not a lawyer, and he is doing the best he can in respect of the difficulties involved. However, we are entitled to the best advice before we surrender the powers of the nation.

4.15 pm

Mr. Corbyn: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I think that I should make a little progress first.

Mr. Corbyn: Give way.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I have been giving way continually, and I have been very patient. Perhaps I will give way in a few minutes.

Just a moment ago, I referred to the substantial powers of a non-elected assembly. I stated that it had an exclusive right to initiate legislation. It can frustrate the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. Although both those institutions have rights of way or entry, as it were, the Commission has substantial enforcement powers in respect of imposing fines under the treaty. To be able to impose fines is very important. I have selected a number of cases in respect of which fines can be imposed.

Mr. Corbyn: Give way.

Sir Trevor Skeet: In a moment.

Those cases involve article 171 for non-compliance with the treaty and article 104c on instructions of the Council of Ministers in stage 3 on monetary policy. Fines may be imposed for breaches of competition business, and search warrants may be issued to enter private premises. There would be a free right to approve agreements that have been negotiated.

Under article 169, breaches by member states may be referred to the European Court of Justice. Those enormous powers are being granted to the Commission either through the Council of Ministers or through the Commission's inherent right. Under Maastricht, those powers have not been diminished—they have been increased.

The Commission is the executive body that implements Community policies, in particular, in respect of European integration. Let no one suggest that it cannot implement that. Under the obligations of the treaty, it is there to do so. The Commission is the body responsible for negotiating treaties with states outside Europe—for example, under GATT and in respect of articles 113 and 228. It is the agent for the union.

Is not that body, which has supreme powers, completely unelected? The United Kingdom public receive no knowledge from Ministers about the enormous powers that the public are ceding. Once those powers have gone, they are like rockets in the sky—they burst and are gone.

Mr. Skinner: Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that it is a little ironic that, after those two or three days in Harrogate, when people like the hon. Gentleman were told that they were to be pulled into line and that the Government were going to go to town and explain Maastricht, the hon. Gentleman is putting forward his arguments about the institutions when there is only a tin-pot little Minister present today, who gets it wrong every time he opens his mouth?

I fully expected to see rows of Ministers present today, including the President of the Board of Trade and all the rest, to argue their corner and to challenge the hon. Gentleman. What has happened? After Harrogate, it is all the same again. The rebels are in charge, and Ministers have left the sinking ship.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I feel obliged to protect the Minister, because he has a difficult job to do. As I said, he is not a lawyer, and the Attorney-General is not here to advise him. The Minister is doing the best he can, but he could get things in better shape. When we reach article J, in about six paragraphs' time——

Several Hon. Members: *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet: I shall proceed a little further.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): I think that my hon. Friend will accept that we might have trouble with the next set of amendments, relating to subsidiarity, because it seems that no one knows what it means. There has been a competition, with a first prize of 140,000 ecu, but who won the prize? A former president of the European Court said that subsidiarity was a prime example of gobbledegook. How can the Committee consider such a set of amendments if no one knows what they mean?

The Chairman: Order. That is not relevant to this batch of amendments. It is the next selection, not this afternoon's selection.

Sir Trevor Skeet: We should not go round in circles on this matter. My suggestion is that the Whips and the

[Sir Trevor Skeet]

Minister should take it on board that we should have a Treasury Minister and a Law Officer in Committee to answer the questions that we have raised.

I should like to mention the extension of competences under the Maastricht treaty. The original areas of the treaty of Rome, as amended by the Single European Act, include competences ranging from A to K in article 3. That is quite a slab of mainly economic power. I should like to mention a few of the competences: the free movement of people, services and capital, competition policy, the single market and, of course, a common agricultural policy.

People in the United Kingdom appreciated that the treaty of Rome was an economic treaty, and they understood it. It was called the European economic treaty. When we move to Maastricht, we move into an entirely different plain with a different stratum. In article 3, we have an extension of the categories from J to T. Those categories are partly economic, but largely political.

One of the political competences is citizenship, which we have already dealt with in article 8. Economic and monetary policy is dealt with in articles 102(a) to 109. Many people would say that that was dead as a dodo in Europe, because the only country which would qualify for it at present is France. Germany would not qualify, so it is unlikely that we will have a common currency in the future.

There is a whole linkage of categories, including education, culture, public health, consumer protection, trans-European networks, industry and development co-operation. Do people realise how far the political powers have been extended?

There has been no reduction in the Commission's powers. Article B argues that the Commission must maintain in full the "acquis communautaire", and further tasks have been assigned to the Commission for those major purposes.

Majority voting has been alluded to. I would not be overdoing it if I said that there has been a vast expansion of majority voting in many policy areas. Column 511 in *Hansard* of 12 March 1986 on the Single European Act shows that the matters to which majority voting applied totalled about 86, and unanimous voting another 32. When one looks at Maastricht and written answer 169 in *Hansard* of 20 May 1992, one finds that qualified majority voting increases by another 40. Enormous areas of policy are covered by majority voting and the trend is definitely towards majority voting being extended further.

In a Europe of 12, majority voting might be serious or less serious, but in an enlarged Europe of up to 16 countries, it would become more complicated. On several matters, such as the middle east, we would never co-operate. We have to operate as members of the United Nations Security Council. Would we not find ourselves with incompatible duties? We are still largely responsible for the Commonwealth. We have certain historic obligations. I doubt whether we could have done anything in the Falkland islands if the Europeans had been invited to have their say.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): My hon. Friend referred to majority voting. There is a serious consideration here, is there not? If the Scandinavian countries come in, their interests will differ in many respects from those of the rest of the Community. They will not wish to join if decisions are made by majority voting and their interests are overwhelmed by those of other countries. That message is coming through clearly from the Scandinavian countries.

Sir Trevor Skeet: As my hon. Friend appreciates, in 1996 the treaty will be renegotiated. That will mean even more majority voting. As the process of enlargement continues, we shall find ourselves in great difficulties.

I noticed that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, in his article in *The Independent* on 4 March, talked about a Europe extending right across to Russia and as far south as we could imagine. That would bring in about 30 states. He asked us to imagine what we would be able to achieve in a Europe of that size. In fairness to the Government, since the large draught of qualified majority voting was introduced under the Single European Act, we have been outvoted on only three occasions. We were outvoted on emulsifiers, on the safety warning on tobacco products and on fisheries policy in the Factortame case. That may be true. It is encouraging. That is in the past three years, but I can see us getting into great difficulties in later years.

Mr. Corbyn: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has returned to the issue of majority voting. Is he aware that, when we move on to discuss foreign policy—if we do—the issue will be crucial? It is possible that, by qualified majority voting, troops could be ordered into parts of the world and deployed in battle? The internal foreign policies of certain countries could be overridden. For example, Ireland has a tradition of neutrality going back to 1922. That is ended by the Maastricht treaty and the consequences of qualified majority voting.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I dare say that my right hon. Friend the Minister would say that unanimity might rule. That might be true in one or two cases in the early stages. However, before the introduction of the Single European Act we had many majority cases. They will be converted to majority voting. We are on the road down. The only way to operate a large Europe is to have majority voting. If decisions are made by majority voting, it matters little what one happens to think of the United Kingdom. If the public appreciate that and are prepared to give away their powers, that is another matter, but we are under an obligation to point that out to them in the first instance.

Mr. Marlow: May I draw my hon. Friend's attention to article 104c, which deals with excessive deficits? Article 104c (1) says:

"Member States shall avoid excessive government deficits."

The protocol says that article 104c does not apply to the United Kingdom. Article 104c (5) says:

"If the Commission"—

the Commission, no less: Mr. Delors and his friends—

"considers that an excessive deficit in a Member State exists or may occur, the Commission shall address an opinion to the Council."

The article goes on to say that the Council, on the recommendation of the Commission, by majority vote shall take such and such action. The Commission will get into the entrails of the economy.

Does the exemption under the protocol apply, or do articles 104c 5 and 6, which are not exempted, apply? Will the Commission have any control over a United Kingdom Government deficit, and will it be able to make any recommendation or have any opinion on it? As we have a

large deficit, that is of fundamental importance. It is so important that we require legal advice, and the Attorney-General should be here to give it.

4.30 pm

Sir Trevor Skeet: We shall reach debate on that subject later, but article 104c applies only during stage 3. We can debate the words "avoid excessive government deficits". The protocol removes article 104c 1 for application to the United Kingdom.

European union operates on consensus, which derives from the increasing use of majority voting. Member states with great power and authority will end up with the greatest authority. Germany had 63 million people and added another 16 million when it amalgamated with the east, which makes about 79 million people—let us call it 80 million. Under article 148, it has 10 votes on the Council; Luxembourg, with 384,000 people, has two votes; and Portugal, with a population of 10·5 million, has five, or half as many as Germany.

When the treaty is revised, I envisage that someone will suggest, quite reasonably, that the numbers of votes should be altered, that Germany should get more and that Portugal's votes should be pared down, but that will be a difficult decision.

Let us not fool ourselves: with an economic and political treaty, the country with the greatest potential in Europe—I think that it is here—will have the right to determine that it has more rights and more say about what does on in Europe. I do not want to be directed by a German-French axis.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): My hon. Friend's actions, in attempting to undermine the Maastricht treaty, would deliver the very thing that he fears most—a Franco-German axis dominating future developments. If the House does not approve the Bill and the Government do not ratify the treaty, who does my hon. Friend think will dominate the 1996 intergovernmental conference? Having thrown away the chance to take the initiative in the Community, which we established at Maastricht, it certainly will not be our Government. If we throw that chance away, we shall not dominate the next intergovernmental conference.

Sir Trevor Skeet: That is totally misconceived; I had thought that my hon. Friend would come up with a more rational idea. The Government have been saying that the capital position of the United Kingdom will be almost negated and that the Americans and Japanese will leave this country. The new Governor of the Bank of England, Mr. Eddie George, said that the City's position depended upon the completion of the single market rather than on monetary integration—in other words, he was saying that we are in Europe. The single market is here and will remain, as the Japanese know.

Referring to the Japanese, the Confederation of British Industry—a fairly responsible organisation—says:

> "Only a small number would see this as having a major effect on their investment, provided it did not lead to withdrawal or exclusion from the single market".

We are not suggesting that the United Kingdom should withdraw from the single market; we are suggesting that we should withdraw from Maastricht, which, as a political treaty, could lead to complications. Switzerland—a neutral country—was invited to join the European Communities. It decided to remain isolated and independent, and it is doing very nicely.

I am all for co-operation, but the rights of the people must not be surrendered without their consent.

Mr. Ian Taylor: My hon. Friend must realise that other countries are applying to join on the basis of the Maastricht agreement. That is a very important point. Another point of importance is that, following a survey last week, the CBI, which my hon. Friend has just quoted, has pointed out that 19 per cent. of investment in manufacturing industry in Britain in the last five years was accounted for by overseas companies, and that more than half of those investors would regard our failure to ratify Maastricht as having a very negative impact on investment and on jobs. I refer to a CBI press release of 2 March.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Other countries invest in the United Kingdom at the time of their supreme power for the purpose of gaining access, through our membership of the single market, to other European countries. But this is not the story that Ministers are spreading.

Mr. Taylor: I am not a Minister.

Sir Trevor Skeet: My hon. Friend says that he is not a Minister. On this basis, he has no propect of becoming one.

I am keen to promote accurate information. In years to come, there may be some abatement. Germany and many other countries are going through a recession. Once they start pulling out, investment will increase again. The United Kingdom is sitting pretty. It will be the first country to come out of recession, and will be able to lead Europe in many ways. This is the most inventive country in Europe. That is why the Japanese have come here, instead of going to France and Germany. We think up processes, and the Japanese apply them.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am sure that we have a splendid Government, but I must ask my hon. Friend to accept that we shall recover from the recession earlier than other countries because we got out of the ERM—whereas, sadly, the others are still stuck in it. Will my hon. Friend warn our friends at the CBI that, if this treaty is approved, we shall be back with fixed exchange rates from 1 January? The Government are entitled to much credit, but my hon. Friend should appreciate that most of it is due to the fact that we escaped from the dreadful, irrelevant, artificial European monetary system.

Sir Trevor Skeet: My hon. Friend supports the line that we should remain in the ERM.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am against the ERM.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Esher (Mr. Taylor).

The Government were against our pulling out of the ERM. However, we did so, and were able to lower interest rates. The Chancellor of the Exchequer told us that, if we were to stick to the mechanism we should be all right, that we should go through with the Bundesbank. We found, however, that it was not appropriate.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): We were proved right about the exchange rate mechanism, but the Maastricht treaty would take us straight back into that system. This country cannot afford the risk of absorption into a

[Mr. William Cash]

political union that would bring protectionism and lead to massive losses in our international trading, at a time when we are running a deficit of about £15 billion a year with the European Communities.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I accede to that, but do not think for one moment that one is not obliged to return to the ERM at a later stage. If one makes a close reading of article 109——

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is being tempted into areas into which he should not stray and he should return to the amendment he was summating.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. It would be churlish, given what I said a short time ago about the presence of senior Ministers, not to record that the Foreign Secretary is in his place.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am much obliged to you, Mr. Morris. Much against my will, I have spoken for longer than I intended, largely because of a number of interruptions——

Sir Teddy Taylor: From the Front Bench.

Sir Trevor Skeet: And elsewhere. I am glad to give way to some of my colleagues who are breaking their necks to try to speak in this debate. I would say to the Foreign Secretary—now that he is here—take your campaign to the country, sir, and give the public the facts.

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot say that on this group of amendments. I have already ruled on that once this afternoon.

Sir Trevor Skeet: I am very much obliged. In that case——

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend has mentioned Japanese investment in the United Kingdom. We have an existing institutional arrangement with the European Community. The treaty suggests——

The Chairman: Order. This specific set of amendments is about the Council, the Commission and Parliament; it is not about Japanese inward investment. Sir Trevor Skeet.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Sir Trevor Skeet *rose*——

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

The Chairman: Order. I called Sir Trevor Skeet, not the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow). The hon. Gentleman may wish to speak later, in which case I may seek to call him.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Bearing in mind the number of interruptions from the Floor on the amendment concerning the institutions, I think that it is only right, given that the closure is likely to follow in two hours' time or perhaps even sooner, I should give other people the opportunity to make their contributions. Against my will, I have spoken for an hour, which I did not intend. I intended to be very brief, but I was induced to make a further contribution. I have done so, and I am now only too glad to finish.

Mr. Garel-Jones: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. I would be grateful for your advice, and I believe that the Committee may be, in view of the fact that, after the completion of the debate on this group of amendments, I believe that we may then come to a vote on amendment No. 28.

Throughout the debate on this group of amendments, I made it clear to the Committee that the Government had made no final decision on this matter. We shall retain an open mind on the merits of restricting representation on the Committee of the Regions to elected local government representatives. We shall, however, still be asking the Committee to reject the amendment—not because we have a rooted objection to the principle of elected local government representatives, but because, from the discussions that we have already had and the content of the debate, it seems wise for the Committee and the Government to retain an element of flexibility to enable us to meet the specific requirements of our regions. However——

Mr. Corbyn: Why is this a point of order?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am coming to that.

The real issue that lies behind amendment No. 28 is not its content but the fact that its approval by the Committee would trigger the Report stage, thus deliberately delaying ratification of the Maastricht treaty. *[Interruption.]* I am coming to the point of order.

The Chairman: Order. The right hon. Gentleman is asking the Chair to make a specific ruling—that is the only basis on which a point of order can be raised, not a point of debate.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course. I am just coming to the question that I want to put to you, Mr. Morris. Some hon. Members have made it clear that they will be voting on this issue as a tactical manoeuvre, as it were—an approach which we deprecate. *[Interruption.]* I am just coming to the question I want to ask, which is important.

The Chairman: Order. Let us be clear on the procedures of this Committee. When a point of order is raised, obviously anybody from one of the Front Benches is called earlier than other hon. Members. Nevertheless, it is a point on which the Chair must rule, and it is not correct for any hon. Member to raise an issue on a different set of amendments. That is why I called to order the hon. Member for Northampton, North. The point of order must relate to the institutions and current group of amendments, and not to subsequent amendments.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If I could have your indulgence for one moment, Mr. Morris—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] I believe that I am right to say that, when debate on this group of amendments is completed—the Opposition have been good enough to inform the Committee that they do not intend to press the lead amendment in this group to a Division—we shall then move immediately to the next group. I think that that is right.

4.45 pm

The Chairman: Order. I announced last Thursday that there would be a vote on amendment No. 28 if it were moved immediately following the conclusion of the debate

on the amendments which are before us now. That is established. What is the right hon. Gentleman's point of order?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful for that, Mr. Morris. It seems to me and to my colleagues on the Front Bench that the issue that will now be voted on is a procedural one. Would it be possible—this is the question for you, Mr. Morris—given that we seek to reject the amendment in order to prevent the artificial delay of the Bill, for a further debate to take place on that matter before the Division is called?

The Chairman: No.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I was very interested in your earlier ruling, Mr. Morris, when you said that, as a legal entity, the Government were indivisible. We have just seen that this is a difficult concept to apply when the Government are schizophrenic and move from one interpretation to another of what should be done in the Committee.

Mr. Spearing: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is remarkable that a Minister of the Crown, a Privy Councillor, is unaware of the basic procedures in relation to this group of amendments and subsequent ones? Does my hon. Friend agree that the Attorney-General should attend the Committee to answer the matters raised by the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) and my hon. Friend? Unless he attends, in accordance with the undertaking given, we should ask the Chairman—not at this stage, but when the debate is concluded—to consider accepting a motion to report progress.

Mr. Barnes: That seems an intelligent suggestion, which should be taken on board.

On Thursday, the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) was taken to task by the hon. Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) on the interpretation of the word "federal". It was felt that the hon. Member for Stafford was mixing up "federal" with "unitary" and using them in an interchangeable way. The problem is that there is a sense in which the words can be interchanged, under certain circumstances, because they describe the same set of arrangements. They are most commonly interchanged when a highly bureaucratic system is being described.

Therefore, the federal structure is something of a sham, because it really turns into a unitary system. The tendency is to use the words "federal" and "unitary" in a similar way. That was how the word "federal" was used to explain the position in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. In that sense, it might not be wrong to describe federalism and the unitary system in Europe as similar. However, if we want to apply the concept of democracy to the developments that should be taking place in Europe, the distinction between "unitary" and "federal" becomes of key importance.

Some people look towards a United States of Europe modelled on the United States of America, with nation rights equivalent to state rights and federal rights at the centre. They see a clear democratic division, and democratic systems determining matters at nation level and at federal level. In that context, the terms need to be kept entirely separate. I argue that we should introduce democratic aspects into the picture. We should be concerned about the serious democratic deficit in the developments currently taking place in the European Community. We seem to be heading towards a unitary system, not a federal system.

When we first entered the Community in 1973, the Commission was clearly the only co-ordinated, organised and permanently centralised influence operating in the Community. The restrictions placed on it related to the unanimity rule, especially as it operated under the Luxembourg accord, and the treaty base under which decisions had to be justified as legally acceptable. However, the restrictions on what the Commission could do were only limited. Even within the unanimity arrangements, horse trading was possible between nations, and between the Commission and different nations, in order to advance as many items as possible and to allow the sphere of influence and treaty considerations to grow. Even then, the treaty was sufficiently wordy and complex to allow extra bits to be added.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Could it be registered that the Foreign Secretary stayed for eight minutes to hear the Minister of State's point of order, and has now gone again, leaving the Treasury Bench friendless, as it was before?

Mr. Barnes: We hope that the Foreign Secretary has made way for the Attorney-General, and that someone will soon join the Minister on the Front Bench.

Mr. Marlow: On a totally separate and perhaps surprising point of order, Mr. Morris. Would it be in order for the Front-Bench team to give a commitment with regard to the Liberal party that it will introduce amendment No. 28—on which a vote is about to be taken—in the other place? Would it be in order for that deal to be done and for my right hon. Friend the Minister to make a statement to that effect from the Dispatch Box?

The Chairman: No.

Mr. Barnes: I see that, in order to make my speech intelligible for those who read it, I shall have to get some scissors and paste to stick together the flow of my argument.

As well as the co-ordinating factor of the Commission, the other aspect that existed from the time of our entry into the Community in 1973 was the role of the Council of Ministers. It met in secret conclave and operated—depending on which version one prefers—either as the legislative organisation making the final decisions in Europe or as a rubber stamp, somewhat like the Privy Council when it agrees to ratify legislation that has passed through the two Houses. The Council of Ministers finally gave legal respectability to measures that were based on decisions that had earlier emerged from the Commission.

Mrs. Dunwoody: That was never the case. It was always clear that the Council of Ministers—through its civil servants in the Committee of Permanent Representatives and through previous meetings—had total control over the agenda. Although there was some horse trading, there was never any question of the Council of Ministers becoming a rubber stamp. We need to develop our EC Committees so that they have even more powers to control our Ministers, not to seek to create other institutions outside.

Mr. Barnes: That intervention illustrates the distinction between our two views on Europe's future development.

[Mr. Barnes]

Presumably my hon. Friend looks towards a Europe of the sort that initially emerged, whereby, under the unanimity provisions, we could block measures through decisions taken by our Ministers. I look to something different; I want something of a proper, democratic, federal nature to be established in Europe. For there to be merely a blocking mechanism, which could be used by nation states, was unacceptable to me. Our views are influenced not just by what has occured, but by how we see matters developing in future.

The next set of institutions that developed were consultative and included organisations such as the Economic and Social Council and the European Parliament—a strangely named parliament, which was not a parliament in the sense of a decision-making institution. It was no more a parliament—perhaps even less of a parliament—than that which developed in Germany under the Kaiser, which was a consultative avenue. At least Germany at that time was under universal franchise, and the Parliament was seen to be important and a sign of the various developments of the Social Democratic party. It gave various openings to Germany's future.

The same could not be said of the European Parliament, which was a purely consultative and amorphous body consisting of different representatives of different nations of different political tendencies. The representatives' voices might be taken into account, but often were not. No wonder there was little interest in what took place in European elections. The decisions that were being made through those elections had very little impact on what would influence the future development of Europe.

The problem with the subsequent changes under the Single European Act and the Maastricht provisions is that the move to overcome the democratic deficit is complex. It contains some progressive elements that are heavily stressed by advocates of Maastricht. However, it also contains many regressive elements that are used by opponents of the development of the Maastricht treaty. We must be aware that those two elements are intimately interconnected.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way and I shall not interrupt further. Will he give a short and accurate description of exactly what the term "democratic deficit" means in English?

Mr. Barnes: Essentially, it means that Europe is not operating according to the democratic principles. We want a move either to establish such an operation or to pull away from further bureaucracy. I do not know whether the hon. Lady wishes to take up those points——

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am your hon. Friend.

Mr. Barnes: I think that as I progress it will be discovered that I have very few friends in the debate. I argue strongly against Maastricht and involve myself in all activities in the House that seek to block the Maastricht treaty. We want a proper, social, democratic and federal Europe. That is often the aim of some of those who support the Maastricht treaty, but it will not achieve that. I support many of the arguments relating to danger used by opponents of Maastricht and agree with the vision of some of its supporters, but I do not think that their aims will be achieved by the treaty, which sends us further into the unitary democratic progress.

The Chairman: Order. Before the hon. Gentleman philosophises any further, will he return to the amendments under discussion?

Mr. Barnes: I thought, Mr. Morris, that I was confining myself to this rather wide group of amendments; I was dealing with some of the relevant aspects of political philosophy, but I shall, in deference to you, return to the subject.

It seems to me that Europe has been only nibbling at the democratic deficit, not tackling it head on. We have moved some way towards giving the European Parliament a greater impact, but such moves have been severely limited. Under the Single European Act, the Parliament operates co-operation procedures with ECOSOC. If there is no unanimity in the Council, certain measures can return to the Parliament for what is called a second reading—although it is a strange form of second reading, and not one that we would understand. Here, on Second Reading, we can make solid decisions or block legislation. In Europe, we are talking about a second consultation on a measure that has been to the Council of Ministers.

5 pm

If the European Parliament is not co-operative and amends a measure, and if the Commission agrees, the Council can adopt the qualified majority voting rule, but the Parliament is only employed to provide further scope for the operation of that rule.

To some simple-minded people, it might seem that qualified majority voting was a democratic procedure. A number of people get together; they do not have to agree unanimously; one lot can outvote the other. It all depends who is making the decisions, and how they have been appointed. In this case, they have been appointed by the nation states and they have been horse trading among themselves before deciding how to act. They are all experienced at using certain devices to hoodwink their own national parliaments about what is taking place.

In this House we have a system of so-called scrutiny, but even if we decide to change a recommendation from the Government in Committee, the Government merely change the resolution when it comes before the whole House and pass what they have wanted all along. The scrutiny measures of the House cannot actually control the Government, therefore. That is not a shortcoming on the part of hon. Members or of our institutional arrangements; neither is it the fault of our Clerks who serve the various Committees. Everything is done as effectively as it can be, but ultimately nothing can be achieved because of the structures into which we are tied.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): If the treaty came into force, would we not get the worst of both worlds? We would lose a great deal of our power from the House. That power has been diminished in the past 20 years in favour of the Community, but we would lose even more of it. Moreover, the European Parliament would not be able to take over those powers, for reasons that my hon. Friend is explaining, and in any case I would not be in favour of its so doing. I might disagree with my hon. Friend about that.

Perhaps this explains why Mr. Alan Clark wrote his article in *The Daily Telegraph* outlining his experience of

what happens in Europe, where permanent officials have tremendous power and Ministers are happy to delegate that power to them.

Mr. Barnes: I agree. Losing powers from the House does not mean that we pass them to an alternative Parliament. Instead, we hand them to the institutions of the Community, giving the Commission greater influence and leaving decisions to the Council of Ministers, where horse trading and outvoting by qualified majority voting are allowed, with no democratic checks and with the electorate having no say.

Under the Single European Act, and until the conference at Edinburgh, the Council still met entirely in secret, and there was no record of how its members had voted. Governments may have made statements about that on occasion—we had some feedback about our Government—but there was no full record. Since Edinburgh, that has started to change. We have to dig around to find out what is going on, though. I have had to table questions to discover what the votes were at the recent Agriculture Council meeting.

I trust that the Government will see to it that such votes are recorded for our information in future so that we can check up on what they are doing and on whether it ties in with the decisions of the House—and of the two Committees that investigate some of these proposals.

There are still some inadequate features of Council meetings. The qualified majority voting provisions have been extended and will be further extended under the Maastricht treaty, by means of the co-decision procedure which amends the consultation and co-operative procedure that has applied hitherto. Formerly, when an item was dropped, it might be lost altogether. Now it can be resurrected under the co-decision procedure. The Council and the Parliament will be equally represented on the Committee dealing with co-decison making. If they can agree, a joint text goes to the Council of Ministers and to the Parliament. Parliament can then decide by simple majority and the Council by qualified majority.

That seems to represent some sort of democracy for the European Parliament, but it actually provides more opportunities for decisions to be taken by the Council of Ministers by qualified majority voting. That is fundamentally undemocratic. Before, when a number of nations came together, the unanimity provision gave a say to each country that was party to an agreement. Qualified majority voting, however, prevents that. So we have been kidded that we are making a democratic advance in this area.

Mr. Marlow: On another institutional aspect, we have referred before to article K.3.2, under which the Council may, on the initiative of the Commission in the area of home affairs and justice,

"adopt joint positions and promote, using the appropriate form and procedures, any co-operation contributing to the pursuit of the objectives of the Union".

The Minister has said that this is all subject to a double lock, under the unanimity procedure and the procedures of the House, but the article is not subject to that double lock and the Commission, with its agenda day by day and year after year, can pursue policies without the House having any further control over them. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will address that matter, because it gives the Commission massive new powers that this Parliament will not be able to gainsay.

Mr. Barnes: I am not impressed by the double lock argument because even if decisions are unanimous a treaty provision will allow the area to be decided by the Community to be extended, even if all that happens is that some nations get together and agree. Treaties should spell out the precise areas of operation and such treaties should be ratified throughout Europe in a series of referendums.

These are seeming sets of democratic changes to facilitate undemocratic practices of qualified majority voting. Maastricht considerably extends qualified majority voting through economic and monetary union, common citizenship, education and public health. Areas that are already covered are extended. The Labour Front-Bench spokesman said that 61 items were to be added to qualified majority voting. Even the social policy provisions fall within those areas and are not entirely unproblematic for democratic socialism.

There will not be a host of social provisions flowing from the social chapter. It will merely provide some hooks on which the Commission and the Council of Ministers can hang certain provisions. Many of those provisions may be progressive, but some could be regressive. Social policy should proceed hand in glove with the development of democratic decision making and should be determined democratically.

There will be a bean feast for Brussels bureaucrats. I am not against bureaucracy in all cases. One cannot have democracy in the advanced systems of the modern world without a host of associated bureaucracies. Bureaucracy should be under solid democratic control and checks, and should not itself run the show. Under the current arrangements, that will occur because of agreements between top politicians in the Government and the Commission.

Mr. Winnick: My hon. Friend has one or two fatal, subversive ideas, but I am glad to know that he is an ally on this measure. He spoke about democratic control. Even if the treaty did not have the glaring omissions and defects that he recognises, what kind of democratic controls or accountability could there be as an effective substitute for Parliament? This Committee is an exercise in democratic accountability, because, however keen the Government are to get the Bill through, they cannot do so until the Committee has examined it line by line. No European Parliament could ever achieve such democratic control, and it would be ridiculous to suggest the contrary.

Mr. Barnes: The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) spoke about problems in the Conservative party and Conservative arrangements in Europe and their links. We should consider the position of democratic socialists. The development of democratic revolutions has always been to the fore in the Labour party. In this country, that revolution was associated with universal franchise. That was not achieved until 1928, when afterwards a minority Labour Government came to power for the first time.

We in the Opposition should direct our minds to democracy in Europe and how it can be established. That is why we should reject the Maastricht treaty and adopt an agenda for a fully fledged democratic, social and federal Europe in which all powers are accorded to the Parliaments, whether European or national. There should be a clear division of authority for those Parliaments. Subsidiarity in no way overcomes the problem; nor is it a substitute for the arrangements that I have outlined. It is

[Mr. Barnes]

a vague and waffly notion and we can get our teeth into it at some later stage. We should seriously involve ourselves in the democratic concept of Europe.

Sir Russell Johnston (Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber): The hon. Gentleman describes subsidiarity as a vague and waffly notion. He will recall that it was basically and originally a theological notion.

5.15 pm

Mr. Barnes: It is a philosophical, social and political theory. It is not a legal concept of constitutional significance that can have anything to do with establishing systems with clear divisions of authority. People should not be fooled by it. We shall come to that on the next amendment.

There is some emptiness about the way in which we deal with European measures. I am involved in many such matters because I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation and of Standing Committee A which considers European legislation. That does not fool me into believing that my work on those Committees is of any great import. I am discovering the difficulties of Parliament's having some say and control of such legislation. We spend a great deal of time and effort investigating such matters, but there is no possibility of our making any serious decisions.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am also a member of European Standing Committee A. We are discussing institutions. Does my hon. Friend accept that the machinery of those Committees is there to be exploited, and that hon. Members do not use those powers? No other part of Parliament has the right to question a Minister for an hour in detail. Hon. Members who do not use such facilities are missing a great opportunity.

Mr. Barnes: My hon. Friend is greatly involved in the activities of Standing Committee A. She fully uses the facilities and makes many fruitful contributions. Hon. Members should be encouraged to do that and can involve themselves in the work of Standing Committee A and Standing Committee B without being members of them. The hour's question time before the one and a half hours of debate on European measures is most fruitful. That procedure would be beneficial in other parts of Parliament.

The Committees and their procedures can unearth details of measures and can embarrass the Government and thereby influence consultative procedures, but they are of minor legislative significance. Even if an amendment is accepted in Committee, it is stood on its head on Report or it is taken over by the Government and put down in their name. We do not know what happens when the amended measure reaches the Council of Ministers because there is no complete report of what happens there or details of the Council's vote. If that changed, the Committee's institutional significance would become more important. Meanwhile, I accept that they are valuable and worth while, and I encourge right hon. and hon. Members to become involved in them.

It is a shame that there are only two European Standing Committees. We tried to establish three, but not enough right hon. and hon. Members could be found to fill them. The Committees are worth while, but let us be under no illusion that they can achieve the unachievable. There must be changes in the Community itself before the scrutiny undertaken by the House can have any democratic significance.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend makes his point very well. However perfect our procedures can be made, and regardless of the number of right hon. and hon. Members who attend European Standing Committees—I know that my hon. Friends the Member, for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) and for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) do so assiduously—those Committees are purely advisory, and until the Community's institutions become transparent, there will be no proper accountability. Does my hon. Friend agree that, as the treaty makes no provision, those who say that the institutions are democratic should not agree to the treaty because the institutions are not transparent or fully accountable in the way that my hon. Friend described?

Mr. Barnes: They are neither transparent nor accountable. There should either be extensions or the type of democratic provision that I described, whereby there would clearly be a federal division between different areas of responsibility. The House could then investigate at a federal level, though it would still have no great say because that would be done under the provisions of an over-arching constitution. This institution could complain that its rights were being invaded. A federal institution could make proper provision, discuss matters and ensure that the legal provisions existing in Europe were observed.

My position is not commonly held in the Committee. Those who are against Maastricht are not usually great friends of the European Community or in favour if its extension and development. Those who are friends of Maastricht are usually happy with its likely achievements. However, I believe that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends have a democratic vision of the future after Maastricht, in which some of the improvements which I suggested might be achieved.

I do not believe that that will happen. My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) suggested that there was among many Members of the European Parliament a belief in the dream of federalism, and that it is on the cards. If I also believed that, I would be in the Maastricht camp, but I do not. I doubt whether the Council of Ministers and the Commission will readily surrender the powers that Maastricht will confer on them.

A Labour party briefing—I will not spill all the beans, but I will dissociate myself from some of the points that it makes—states:

> "The EC is not a unitary state and we do not agree that further progress towards European unity will, or should, lead to a European superstate."

I wholly believe that Maastricht's provisions will take us much closer to a unitary state and to becoming a European super-state that lacks democratic input—or which provides, at best, for democratic consultation—and democratic decision making. We must add those other elements to produce something acceptable. If that cannot be done, the treaty must be stopped until the safeguards that I described are on the agenda.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Before I turn to lead amendment No. 18, moved by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), it is worth noting that a considerable number of amendments in the group relate to titles III and

IV of the treaty. They cover the provisions establishing the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Atomic Energy Community. Changes made by the treaty are purely technical, to bring those provisions into line with the treaty of Rome. It would be nonsense to have different rules for appointing the Commission depending on which Community treaty was being used. That would be a recipe for chaos.

I hope that the Committee will think it right that I do not deal with the European Coal and Steel Community and Euratom provisions separately. I shall limit my remarks to those amendments which relate specifically to the treaty of Rome, which will hold true also for Euratom and the ECSC.

I am sure that the Committee is grateful to the right hon. Member for Copeland for indicating that amendment No. 18 is a probing amendment. It has allowed right hon. and hon. Members to have a wide-ranging debate on Community institutions. Amendment No. 18 seeks to delete article 138d of the treaty, which grants citizens of the union the right to petition the European Parliament. I hasten to say that I feel certain that the Opposition have no wish to remove that privilege from European citizens.

I am sure that most right hon. and hon. Members agree that individual citizens should have a channel to air grievances relating to the Community. Article 138d formalises and confirms a right which has existed in practice and in the rules and procedures of the European Parliament for many years. It provides useful clarification by specifying that grievances must be concerned with matters which come within the Community's fields of activity and which affect the petitioner directly. It is entirely up to the European Parliament to decide how to respond to complaints. It may refer them to the ombudsman provided for under article 138e.

It is important to remember that those provisions help to make the Community more real and accessible to the people, which I am sure will be welcomed by right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the Committee.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend knows that I have the greatest personal respect for him, and the greatest sympathy for the difficulties in which he finds himself at the moment. Many technical, legal questions were asked during the debate, and others might be put to my right hon. Friend during the course of his speech. Is it the intention that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will be present for part of this debate?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am extremely grateful for my hon. Friend's sympathy and concern, which has been a great encouragement to me throughout the Committee stage. As my hon. Friend knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General made it clear that, where specific matters require the Committee to receive legal advice on amendments and their legal status, he will make himself available.

My hon. Friend reminds me that I had some exchanges with one of my hon. Friends, and I shall refer to them. The Committee will decide, but I think that they were commonplace exchanges about opinions—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] That matter is for the Committee to decide when I reach the relevant point in my speech.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman later, but I should like to make a little more progress. The right hon. Gentleman was not present at that point in the debate. I do not say that in any critical sense; I know that he is a frequent attender.

The role of the European Parliament is strengthened by the provisions of the Maastricht treaty, in both the legislative and non-legislative spheres. Apart from the establishment of the right to petition the Parliament, and the establishment of an ombudsman, the Parliament will be enabled to set up temporary committees of inquiry under article 138c to investigate alleged contraventions of maladministration in the implementation of Community law. The Parliament will also have a similar role in scrutinising the actions of the Commission, particularly through enhanced provisions for financial accountability. Those proposals were both promoted and strongly supported by the United Kingdom during the Maastricht negotiations.

5.30 pm

There is also an increase—albeit limited—in the legislative role of the European Parliament. The Parliament has always been consulted on EC legislation. The Single European Act increased its involvement by creating a "two reading" procedure for single-market and other business. That procedure, which is known as the co-operation procedure, is now in article 189c. The Maastricht treaty makes two important changes. First, it extends the co-operation procedure in article 189c into some policy areas, such as transport and training; in those areas, the voting procedure moves up from simple majority to qualified majority. Secondly, in article 189b, the treaty introduces a negative assent procedure—into certain areas, such as the single market.

That is a "three reading" procedure. After the Council has made its final decision on the substance, the European Parliament may block the legislation, but it may not amend it. It cannot overrule the Council on substance. The choice is between legislation on terms decided by the Council, and no legislation at all. When the institutions disagree, there is a conciliation procedure; but the last word on substance remains with the Council, and I think that the Committee will agree that that is right.

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have already promised to give way to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies). If he does not wish to intervene now, I shall continue.

Two other amendments tabled by the official Opposition—Nos. 33 and 34—are of particular interest. Both deal with the Commission.

Mr. Marlow: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: May I make a little more progress? I will give way when I have finished this part of my speech.

Amendment No. 33 seeks to delete from the Bill article 158 of the Maastricht treaty, which relates to the appointment of the Commission. The article provides for an increase, from 1995, in the term of office of the Commission's president from two to five years, and in that of ordinary members of the Commission from four to five years, thus making their appointment conterminous with the European Parliament. Article 157 makes it clear that the Commission must remain independent, and we shall work to ensure that that remains the case.

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

Article 158 also subjects the Commission as a body—including the President—to a vote of approval by the European Parliament. That is a welcome step forward. The Commission will now be subject to greater democratic scrutiny, but member states will retain the right to nominate their own Commissioners, and to appoint both president and Commission. The third element introduced in article 158 is the establishment of an interim Commission, whose term of office shall expire on 6 January 1995. As the Maastricht treaty has not yet entered into force, the present Commission has been appointed for four years under the existing article 158, but on the understanding that its term of office will end in January 1995.

Before I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), let me answer a specific point put to me by the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) about the European Parliament. He asked about decisions on the additional six seats that Britain will have as a result of the Maastricht decisions. The distribution of seats is now under active consideration by all Departments, and I expect the Government to reach a view at a very early date. Of course, we shall then consult the Opposition parties.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the need to redraw boundaries. As he will know, the European Assembly Elections Act 1978 contains no provision that permits use of the Boundaries Commission in these circumstances; the Government are therefore considering how best to proceed, and hope to reach a decision soon. We are aware of the tight deadline to which the hon. Gentleman referred —before the 1994 elections—and the heavy work load on the existing Boundaries Commission.

Mr. Marlow: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Among the most important characteristics of a nation state—even one which is co-operating with other nation states—are defence, foreign policy, immigration and judicial affairs. Why has it been found necessary to involve the European Parliament in those affairs? Doing so suggests that we are moving towards a European nation state, rather than a group of independent nation states.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I strongly agree—as do the Government—with my hon. Friend's identification of what could be regarded as the most significant attributes of nation statehood: foreign policy, interior, justice and defence. One of the unique breakthroughs of the Maastricht treaty is its provision of a framework for co-operation between member states, albeit within the wider framework of a union treaty.

We have debated these matters earlier in the Committee stage. I have never claimed—nor, I think, have the Government—that we can be positively certain that we can entrench the intergovernmental structure which, thanks to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's negotiating skill, is a unique feature of the Maastricht treaty. We believe, however, that it marks the point at which intergovernmentalism—co-operation between nation states—becomes respectable: indeed, we would argue that there is nothing more respectable, in co-operation between 12 member states within the framework of the traditional treaty of Rome, than intergovernmental co-operation.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Perhaps I may finish the point. Then I will give way to the hon. Member for Hamilton.

As I have said, we have never claimed that we can be certain of entrenching that intergovernmental structure for ever. The point about the Community is that there is a perfectly proper, continuing debate between nation states about the way in which we want it to develop. We believe —with the support of not only Conservative Members but, I think, all hon. Members—that we now have a chance to influence and shape that debate. In my view, the Maastricht treaty will give us the opportunity to entrench the aspects of co-operation between nation states to which my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North and I—and, I believe, all hon. Members—attach importance.

Mr. George Robertson: I am grateful to the Minister for responding to the specific questions that I asked him last Thursday about the six extra seats in the European Parliament that were agreed at the Edinburgh summit.

When the Minister submitted his highly publicised but lengthy notice of resignation, he said that his resignation would allow him greater flexibility to speak his mind during the Maastricht ratification procedures. However, his answers to the questions that I have put to him on a specific and important issue read like a classic "Yes Minister" script. The matter is "under active consideration"; a decision will come "at an early date"; "we expect to hear soon"; "we appreciate the early deadline, but I am not going to tell you anything".

Does the Minister realise that the European elections are some 56 weeks away? This time next year, candidates will be standing for constituencies in this country. It really is not good enough to tell the House of Commons at this stage that the Government have all these matters "under active consideration", but cannot tell the House anything now. Is this yet another sign of the Government's present state of dazed confusion over the whole European issue? The Minister has nothing to announce, because the Government are paralysed by the splits in the Conservative party.

The country will come to exactly the same conclusion. Given that the Government have gone such a short way down the road to agreement on the boundaries, candidates will be chosen and then have to be chosen again.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman is a perfectly charming Member of the House and of the Committee, and I do not object to being teased about my postdated cheque, but as he has never been a Minister, and is not likely to become one, it may surprise him to learn that from time to time Ministers have to read out bits of paper given to them by other Departments. The essential point that he made was a fair one, and it is well taken. The matter is extremely urgent, and I assure him that, despite the rather turgid prose that I have read on its behalf, the Home Office attaches importance to it and is well aware of its urgency.

Amendment No. 34——

Mr. Spearing: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall in a moment. I like to make progress, if I can, in little chunks.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have given way twice to my hon. Friend. I shall give way next to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

Amendment No. 34, which stands in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), would require the Government to obtain the approval of the House for its nominees as British Commissioners. There is already some consultation between the Government and the Opposition on the appointment of the United Kingdom's Commmissioners. The Government intend to continue this practice, but it should remain a matter of practice. It would be inappropriate to enshrine it in legislation.

Amendment No. 426, which stands in the name of the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), is important. It is, essentially, the proportional representation amendment and it would require the Government to implement a uniform electoral procedure for the 1994 European parliamentary elections. It is clearly a reference to proportional representation, and the Committee understands the motives of the right hon. Gentleman and his colleagues in tabling it.

It is impossible for the Government to give a commitment to implement proposals which depend on agreement, first, in the European Parliament and, next, by unanimity in the Council of Ministers. The European Parliament has been trying to agree a uniform electoral procedure for, I think, 20 years. It is considering new proposals which would require at least 50 per cent. of seats in member states to be elected by proportional representation. It is necessary, first, for the Parliament to agree those procedures; they then have to be agreed unanimously by the Council of Ministers.

Sir Russell Johnston: The Minister is correct. Nevertheless, it is a fair guess that the DeGucht proposals, as they are popularly known after the rapporteur, will reach the Council of Ministers later this month. That being so, and unanimity being required, is the Minister saying that the Government will seek to veto the proposals?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I would rather wait and see whether Parliament approves them. It has failed to do so in the past 20 years. If it approves them, we shall see what becomes of them.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): The Minister may unconsciously be misleading the Commmittee, but the European Parliament agreed a proposal for a uniform system in 1983, which was ignored by the Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If that is so, I stand corrected. It certainly was not my intention to mislead the Committee. I am not aware of that proposal being put to the Council of Ministers. My understanding is that, if it had been agreed under the normal procedures, it would have gone automatically to the Council of Ministers.

5.45 pm

New clause 21, which stands in the name of the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) is also important. It would require the Government to provide a written account of their position and intentions if the European Parliament, acting under the negative assent procedure, stated that it intended to reject a common position agreed by the Council of Ministers. I believe that that is the import of the right hon. Gentleman's new clause. We had a debate similar to this on another new clause tabled by the right hon. Gentleman.

I understand that hon. Members will wish to be informed of the progress of proposals under the new negative assent procedure, especially if the European Parliament states that it intends to reject the common position agreed in council. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that the House will be kept fully informed, as it is now, of the progress of all legislative proposals under existing scrutiny procedures. Under those procedures, the Government have agreed to keep Parliament informed of developments which occur after an initial explanatory memorandum has been supplied detailing the Commission's proposals and the Government's view. Hence, we would expect to submit a further explanatory memorandum if the European Parliament rejected a common position.

The scrutiny procedures of the House—I shall comment further on this later, as the hon. Members for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) raised it only recently—work well and are capable of dealing with the extension and modifications of the co-operation procedure that the negative assent procedure entails.

I say to the Committee, especially to Conservative Members, that we should be extremely cautious before passing an amendment which would tie down the way in which hon. Members scrutinise legislation. The Committee will recall that the scrutiny arrangements for European Community legislation were revised in 1990 following the fourth report of the Select Committee on Procedure in the 1988-89 Session.

Two recommendations of particular significance were made, to which the hon. Members for Crewe and Nantwich and for Derbyshire, North-East and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) referred. Hon. Members, regardless of their view and attitude to the Community, have made a significant contribution to the work of the House on those Standing Committees. The Procedure Committee reported in December 1991 on its review of the first Session of operation of the two Standing Committees, which led to some minor changes.

I ask members of the Committee to put to one side their differences about Britain's place in the Community and how it may develop. This is, essentially, a House of Commons matter, and if we lay down procedures on how the House is to scrutinise Community legislation——

Mrs. Dunwoody *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: May I finish the point? I shall then give way to the hon. Lady, who has made interesting interventions on this point and who plays an important role in one of the Standing Committees.

The procedures are bound to some extent to be inflexible. It would require further legislation to change them if they proved less than ideal. That would require parliamentary time, which could be devoted to more useful purposes, and furthermore—this is a point that the Committee will want to bear in mind, and I mean this with no disrespect to the other place—it would mean that the other place would have a legislative say in the procedures of this House.

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

The two new Standing Committees may have defects, and we may want to improve them as we go along, but if we tie the way in which we scrutinise EC legislation we shall be going down a very dangerous road. I am sure that the irony of the situation would not be lost on a number of my colleagues if we reached the point where our procedures were effectively regulated by a piece of European legislation.

Mrs. Dunwoody: The right hon. Gentleman will be aware that much of the legislation which comes before the House has the force of law and that we seek adequate ways not only of debating it before the decisions are taken but of getting a report. If the right hon. Gentleman seriously cares about the House of Commons, he will want it to be possible for us to get a report on what is happening. If he does not care but wishes to transfer all our rights, he will clearly not accept the amendment.

Mr. Garel-Jones: With respect, we are discussing what I would call a House of Commons matter. I am attempting to separate it from the disagreements that we may have about our approach to the Community. I agree that it is important that the House should have the opportunities that it thinks appropriate to examine matters in Committee. The hon. Lady was kind enough to say that she thought that the new procedures introduced in the Standing Committees, which enable right hon. and hon. Members to question Ministers on an inquisitorial basis for an hour before dissolving themselves into a Committee, were an interesting innovation. Certainly it is an innovation of which she has made particular and distinguished use.

What I am trying to say is that it would be a rather rigid way in which to proceed if we were to put such matters, about which the House knows a great deal, into a Bill which much pass through another place and then become an Act of Parliament. As I said, the irony would not be lost on a number of my hon. Friends who are anxious—as I am, and as we all are—to preserve the House's position if we were to allow a piece of EC legislation to become the vehicle through which the procedures of the House were decided. If the Committee divides on any of the new clauses, I hope that hon. Members who are worried about the House's position—especially my hon. Friends among them—will at least for these issues place on one side our debates on the treaty as a whole and regard this as a House matter.

Two other issues have been raised in the debate so far. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) suggested that all the activities listed in article 3a to 3t are now for decision by qualified majority voting, not unanimity. That is not quite correct. Unanimity is retained for key decisions on the environment under article 3k, for all decisions on industry under article 3l, for key decisions on research and development under article 3m, for all decisions on culture under article 3p, and for all decisions on energy, civil protection and tourism.

In a previous debate, the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) mentioned legislation on zoos. He should know that the Commission agreed at Edinburgh to consider withdrawing its proposals on the conditions in which animals are kept in zoos on the grounds of subsidiarity. Of course, that is to be the subject of the next debate when the Committee moves on, but I observe in passing that it must be significant that proposals are already being considered for withdrawal under subsidiarity before it has even come to have the force of law, as I hope and trust that it will when the treaty is ratified.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) was kind enough to give way to me several times. He was, of course, right to say that as a general proposition there are, under the treaty of Rome, areas in which the Commission's power has been extended. I do not dispute that, but I was attempting to explain that the wording of the arrangements in article J.9 of the new treaty, where the Commission is fully associated with the work of the Community, applies by extension to the new intergovernmental areas. The wording is broadly speaking that of article 30(3)(b) of the Single European Act. Article J.9 states:

"The Commission shall be fully associated with the work carried out".

I believe that the wording is, indeed, identical with that of the Single European Act. That is the point that I was trying to make. I do not dispute my hon. Friend's general proposition about other parts of the treaty.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way because he said a little while ago that he would give way on that point. Does he agree that the Commission will have greatly increased powers of initiative in what he claims is an intergovernmental area? Under article J.8, which covers foreign and security policy, the Commission can initiate matters to the Council. Under K.9 it can initiate matters relating to six home affairs topics, such as immigration, asylum and similar issues. So is the Minister not wrong to suggest to the hon. Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) that there are no increased powers? As the Minister knows, powers of initiation are very important, so the idea of the intergovernmental being separate—as the Minister and the Foreign Secretary, who has just walked in, would claim —will surely not be correct in practice.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If I gave that impression, I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, to the Committee and to my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North. I am trying to say that the powers under article J.8 or J.9——

Mr. Spearing: Article J.9.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The powers under article J.9 are, in practice, not new powers because they have developed under European political co-operation. In practice, the Commission has already been able to initiate discussions and this merely formalises it in the treaty. I do not think that there will be any disagreement between the hon. Gentleman and me on this issue. The crucial difference is that, within the treaty of Rome proper, as one might call it, the Commission has the exclusive right of initiative; that is its essential power in that treaty.

I realise that many other hon. Members wish to speak. I have perhaps spoken a little earlier than the Committee expected, but I now conclude so that other hon. Members can participate.

Mr. Hoon: For the first time in these debates, I have some sympathy with those who consistently criticise the European Community and, in particular, the operation of

some of its institutions. Clearly, proper criticisms can be made, but I differ from the critics over what solution should be suggested to the problems that they describe.

From the debate so far, I can only assume that the solution favoured by most of the critics would involve the repatriation of virtually all European Community decision-making powers, thereby making most of its institutions redundant. The practical difficulty with that argument is that it assumes that it is possible to return to decison making by each of the 12 member states, presumably operating together on an intergovernmental basis to produce what would, in effect, be a series of international treaties.

Even those who have been most critical of Community institutions have accepted that it is necessary to take decisions at the European level. Indeed, I think that it was my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) who spoke about the operation of international rules on environmental protection. In the modern world, it is clearly vital that we recognise the urgent need to take effective international action to protect our environment. In such urgent matters, it would not be possible to wait for a series of countries to agree on the text of an international treaty.

Anyone familiar with the operation of the various conferences considering ways to protect our environment knows that, in the end, we reach the lowest common denominator of agreement, which is usually far too late in terms of the problem under consideration.

The institutions of the European Community have one significant advantage over any international organisation —the advantage that is most criticised in this debate. The EC's advantage is that it can make law that is binding across its territory. Moreover, it can now by a majority make that law for all 12 member states, which are then bound by those decisions.

6 pm

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): My hon. Friend makes a good point on the environment. However, does he agree that the environment and pollution cannot be dealt with across half a continent? If we are seriously to deal with the matter, we must involve eastern Europe and countries outside Europe. The only way in which we can deal properly with environmental questions is internationally.

Mr. Hoon: My hon. Friend makes a fair point. We are concentrating for the moment on the environment as an issue in relation to institutional change. Because the EC takes decisions more efficiently by majority voting, it can set standards that are often then followed by the very countries to which my hon. Friend refers. The EC manages to produce a series of standards which, if we waited for every country affected to agree a policy, would be far too late in terms of environmental protection.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is my hon. Friend seriously suggesting that many of the existing Community members automatically follow the rather poor environmental standards that are set by the Community?

Mr. Hoon: I do not accept that the environmental standards are poor. Indeed, in many respects the EC has enacted progressive standards——

Mrs. Dunwoody: Are those standards followed by member states?

Mr. Hoon: I shall come to that point. Those standards have not been received especially enthusiastically by this Government. The Community enacts legislation, and if member states are found to be in breach of it, there are proper procedures within the treaty to enforce it. Right hon. and hon. Members frequently draw that point to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

I make that point as an illustration of the difficulty for the critics of the existing constitutional arrangements. They seek simply to turn the clock back, and for each member state to try to reach a common decision. That is impractical in the modern world. Nevertheless, given that the EC has legislative responsibility, an essential underpinning all its legislative activities is that that legislation is passed by democratic institutions. In this respect, the European institutions fail a significant test— the democratic test.

Of the various European institutions that we are debating, the one that has been directly elected to reflect the views of the people of Europe, the European Parliament, has the least influence and the least responsibility, both in terms of day-to-day decision making in the European Community and, crucially, in terms of its role in the legislative process.

It has often been observed that, when the EC considers whether a country should be admitted to membership, the first basic question which is always asked is whether that country operates democratically, whether its institutions are freely and fairly elected, and whether they exercise proper control over its Government. It has been rightly argued that, on that test, the EC's own institutions would fail on the ground of their lack of democratic accountability. It has been argued that the EC's own institutions would not qualify to be admitted to membership of the EC.

The debate about democracy in the EC is not new. The Single European Act was seen by some as marking a significant change in the powers of the European Parliament. Although the Single European Act has clearly improved the ability of the European Parliament to delay legislation, the real beneficiary of the Act has been the European Commission, especially because of its ability to select amendments during the legislative process.

Since the passing of the Single European Act, the European Commission has been able to play off the European Parliament against the Council, and vice versa. When the European Parliament's amendments agree with the line established by the European Commission, it is generally prepared to accept them. It rejects amendments that might cause it difficulty in the Council. The Commission also tells the Council that certain amendments are vital to the European Parliament, and that it is not prepared easily to be deflected from its course. As a result, the institutional view of the Commission increasingly prevails, as it plays off one institution against the other.

The weakness of the European Parliament can be seen by examining in detail the legislative process in the European Community. At the end of what may have been a long period of consultation, of debate and of decision, the European Parliament agrees on amendments to proposals for legislation. Those amendments may reflect the views of Members of the European Parliament from

[Mr. Hoon]

12 different countries, they may reflect the views of a wide range of political parties and groups, and they may be approved by the overwhelming majority not only of the Members of the European Parliament present, but of all those who are entitled to be present.

At the end of that exhausting process, what happens far too often is that a single Commissioner rejects the amendments, not necessarily in terms of principle. The Commissioner may say not only that will he not accept the amendments, but that he will not even put them to the Council for consideration. Nothing in the Single European Act requires that. It is simply a way in which the Commission has chosen to exercise its powers.

As many hon. Members have said, the European Commission, which has the sole responsibility for initiating legislation, in practice can also determine which amendments are selected for further debate in the Council. The Commission's response is that the great majority of amendments tabled by the European Parliament are ultimately accepted by the Council of Ministers. The reason for that, again, reflects the lack of real accountability in the European Commission.

The amendments accepted tend to be sensible and practical amendments, which are necessary because the European Commission often has not thought through the detail of legislation when it makes proposals for new directives or regulations. The European Parliament provides the opportunity for widespread public consultation among those affected by the Commission's proposal.

Dr. Godman: My hon. Friend is offering a sustained and thoughtful critique of the modus operandi of the European Commission. Surely that institution, along with the others, will have new competences as a result of the treaty. Is it not likely that the extent of those competences will be determined ultimately by the European Court of Justice?

Mr. Hoon: Certainly, challenges to the institutional framework of the EC have occasionally been successful in the European Court of Justice. I am not sure that I can anticipate what those challenges are likely to be in future. The European Court of Justice certainly fulfils a constitutional role in determining the precise framework of the EC decision-making process, but I cannot say what those cases are likely to be.

The European Parliament often fulfils a function in the legislative process in the EC similar to that fulfilled by a House of Commons Standing Committee. Essentially, a series of amendments are tabled, many of which are readily accepted by the European Commission because they are tidying-up amendments that alter the wording, but not necessarily the substance. Those amendments may have been tabled at the suggestion of interest groups directly affected by the legislation which had not previously been consulted by the Commission.

If it is sensible for the European Parliament to table tidying-up amendments and assist the Commission to produce more sensible and practicable legislation, it must follow as a matter of principle that the European Parliament should also have a much more significant role in determining what is politically necessary.

After all, the European Parliament has been directly elected to fulfil a particular responsibility within the Community. The European Parliament should have political responsibility. The Commission should not be allowed to claim, in the interests of its own institutional policy, that the amendments of the European Parliament cannot be put before the Council of Ministers. Unfortunately, that happens far too frequently.

The Maastricht treaty provides changes in that legislative procedure and some improvements, which can be welcomed with two small cheers. The co-decision procedure allows the European Parliament the opportunity of a Second Reading across a much wider range of subjects than was previously the case. It offers the European Parliament an enhanced ability to reject legislation. In turn, that gives the European Parliament a greater ability to pressure the Council of Ministers. The European Parliament will have greater bargaining power within the institutional framework that we have been discussing.

The problem with the negative powers, which have been available to the European Parliament under the Single European Act, but which are extended by the Maastricht treaty, is that, after many years of discussion and debate on a particular legislative proposal, in practice the European Parliament can reject legislation entirely or simply accept what is on offer at a fairly late stage in the process.

Those who criticise the operation of the European Parliament because the Maastricht treaty allows it far too much influence and power are missing the point. The European Parliament either accepts what is on offer or it throws out the legislation, with all the consequences of doing so. The changes in the Maastricht treaty will only slightly enhance the ability of the European Parliament to participate in the legal process of making law. However, they do not do that in a helpful or constructive way.

I welcome the assent and consultation procedures. The assent procedures were originally introduced by the Single European Act, and they are likely to be extended by the Maastricht treaty to new areas involving the structural and cohesion funds and certain international agreements. The assent procedures, as extended by the Maastricht treaty, will undoubtedly give the European Parliament greater bargaining power. There are currently suggestions in the European Parliament about how those bargaining powers might be used.

However, in the context of an intergovernmental conference, where there were great debates about giving the European Parliament real power and responsibility, it is unfortunate that the power that can be exercised in the light of the Maastricht treaty will, in the end, be only at the margins. It will be a power for the European Parliament to use its negative influence to block what might otherwise be sensible proposals to achieve something practical. That is a matter of regret.

I want now to consider the European Commission, and link that to my remarks about the European Parliament.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I have followed my hon. Friend's comments with great interest. He is making a thoughtful contribution. However, does he agree that, in the way that he has described, the European Parliament is not being given the necessary powers to control the Community—and, in particular, to regulate and control the monetary express train that is now sweeping through Europe? The European Community is increasingly dominated by unaccountable bankers, financiers and

business interests. We do not have through the European Parliament what we should have—which is a proper democratic mechanism to regulate and control. In other words, the interests of economics, business and financiers are being put before democratic interests, That is the problem with the treaty.

Mr. Hoon: The view that I have held for many years, and the view that I hope would receive a widespread support in the Committee, is that the real issue for the European Community is to make the Commission subject to some democratic control. That must be control through a series of national parliaments or—I believe that this is more practical—through national parliaments working together with the European Parliament. In practical terms, it will not be possible for 12 separate, national parliaments to control the activities of the European Commission. In practical terms, control will have to be exercised by the European Parliament.

6.15 pm

Mr. Leighton: My hon. Friend has made an interesting contribution about the European Parliament. However, does he really believe that the European Parliament could hold the European executive to account? Does he really believe that the European Parliament could be accountable to the European electorate? There is really no such thing as a European electorate. There are a number of different electorates. The European Parliament will never be the focus for the aspirations, hopes and loyalties of the diffrrent European electorates.

Mr. Hoon: I do not see the difference. There are clearly different electorates across the Community. However, I dare say that my right hon. and hon. Friends from Scotland would claim that their electorate is different from that in Ashfield which elected me to the House. Electorates vary in the different parts of the European Community.

I see no difficulty in the European Parliament controlling the activities of the Commission. Those who have criticised the operation of the European Parliament have claimed that it is not democratic. In a sense, if that is the criticism, we must find ways of making it more democratic.

One argument that has been advanced which I do not accept is that we could make the Community more democratic by repatriating decision making to national Parliaments. The days of that kind of approach have passed. The kind of decisions that we now have to take must be taken at an international level.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the problems is that the Community has reached the point where it is taking highly important decisions on economics and politics and imposing them from the top downwards? There is no sign in my constituency that people want the powers that my hon. Friend is talking about to be transferred to the institutions. There is no clear commitment in any part of the electorate that people want those powers to shift. Why cannot my hon. Friend accept that repatriation, as he calls it, would conform with the views of our electorate, while centralisation would not?

Mr. Hoon: That depends on a basic philosophical view of the role of parliaments and elections. It seems to me that parliaments exist to control the forces that my hon. Friend has described. The economic forces need to be subject to the democratic control provided by parliaments. However, I disagree with my hon. Friend in that I do not believe that many of the decisions that she described are capable of being controlled by one Government in one nation state.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Does the hon. Gentleman share my view that we must seek to exercise democratic control not simply through the European Parliament, but also through national parliaments? One of the tasks of this Parliament in the next four years is to improve the Committees on which the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) serves, and make them more effective where we can. We must also try to influence other national parliaments, which have not been as active as this House, to take an interest. Democratic control in respect of the Commission should be exercised by national parliaments in co-operation with the European Parliament.

Mr. Hoon: The Minister has anticipated some of the points that I hope to develop.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that there is an alternative which he has completely excluded? We could return to the previous situation, in which the assembly of parliaments in Europe was indirectly elected and reflected the situation in each of the member states' parliaments. Effectively, that would answer the points which the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) made about the European Parliament reflecting the views of the nation states.

Mr. Hoon: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, and it is certainly a possibility. As someone who is struggling with responsibilities both in the European Parliament and the House of Commons, I assure the hon. Gentleman that the volume of legislation which goes before the European Parliament makes it much more difficult to combine the two functions than perhaps it was before 1979. Therefore, I am not sure that that is still a practical possibility.

Given the weaknesses, as I see it, in the decision-making process in the European Community in terms of the criticisms which have been expressed about a lack of democratic accountability, the first priority on which we could agree is that the European Commission should be subjected much more to the democratic will of the European Parliament. The intergovernmental conference failed to address that properly.

There was the opportunity, with widespread support across the Community, of tackling the problem which hon. Members have criticised—that decisions were taken by the European Commission without reference to parliaments, and sometimes without reference to Governments. Those decisions need to be checked, and the way in which to check them is by making the Commission much more accountable to the European Parliament.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Gentleman has a great deal of faith in the European Parliament, although I do not think that it is shared universally. One reason is that there is a suspicion—I put it no higher—that the European Parliament will always take a decision based on what that decision will do to enhance its power and prestige, not on what is best for the government of Europe.

Another reason is that we have a Parliament here which is not perfect, but at least we speak the same language, and we have coherent parties. The European Parliament speaks about eight different languages, has no such thing

[Mr. Marlow]

as party and is often referred to as the tower of Babel. It is not a coherent body which can take coherent decisions and coherently monitor other European institutions.

Mr. Hoon: There are nine official languages in the European Parliament. All I can say about the tower of Babel is that, when I came here, I was not entirely prepared for the amount of noise which is generated at 3.15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It is no criticism of the House of Commons; it is simply part of the nature of our democracy.

If the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) spent some time listening to the European Parliament and the excellent interpretation and translation facilities which are available, he would not have the difficulties he anticipates. If he spends some time at the European Parliament, he may well be more impressed than he is at present.

The Commission enjoys some improvements to its position as a result of the Maastricht treaty. The treaty will allow the European Commission to have an improved role in the process of bringing about economic and monetary union, especially in the assessment of the economic performance of member states as a basis for entering the third stage of that system. Article 171 gives the Commission power to impose fines on member states which the European Court of Justice might have found to be in breach of the treaty. Essentially, the changes do not substantially alter the role of the European Commission.

A much clearer effort could have been made at the intergovernmental conference to bring about the appointment of a European Commission which was more clearly subject to control by the European Parliament. Article 158 contains a new power to allow the European Parliament to approve nominations to the European Commission, Moreover the President of the European Commission will be nominated only after consultation with the European Parliament.

Article 158 says:

"The president and the other members of the Commission . . . shall be subject as a body to a vote of approval by the European Parliament."

The provisions set out in the Maastricht treaty reflect only article 144 of the treaty of Rome, which allows the European Parliament to dismiss the European Commission as a whole by passing a vote of censure with a two-thirds majority. That has never happened in practice, although it came close once. Over many years, the European Parliament has recognised that the power to dismiss is in the nature of a blunderbuss. While eliminating a specific Commissioner who might have been unpopular or incompetent, one lost many friends in the process.

Given that the changes in the Maastricht treaty will allow the European Parliament to play, for the first time, some role in the reappointment of the Commission, there may be some slight improvements in the treaty, which must be welcomed. Nevertheless, we have not established a situation in which the European Commission and, more importantly, individual Commissioners are aware that their decisions are subject to the control that we would expect to see with in the relationship which exists between an elected body and appointed officials. Changes in the terms of office for the European Commission may help. The coincidence of the terms of the European Parliament and those of the European Commission may improve the situation by making the Commissioners more accountable.

I turn to the points made by the Minister of State a few minutes ago. In the institutional framework in the European Community, we must find a way of bringing together democratic control by national parliaments, together with the sort of control which should exist at the European level. In a practical sense, that is the only way in which those of us who are concerned about the lack of democracy in the European Community can look forward to the necessary changes.

We need to establish a community of interest. We must find ways in which we can bring together, in an institutional sense, members of national parliaments, together with members of the European Parliament. That is already done practically in two countries. Belgium and Germany have established joint committees of elected members of the national parties, which meet regularly with members from those countries of the European Parliament. That gives the advantage of early warning of legislative proposals from the European Community to national parliamentarians. Equally—I recognise the criticisms made earlier in the debate about the European Parliament—it gives members of the European Parliament access to the prestige and institutional arrangements which are available as far as most national parliaments are concerned.

It would have a double advantage for each of the bodies involved in the process. The joint committees appear to operate effectively as a means of channelling information from the European level to the national level and—recognising the concerns and sensitivities of this Committee—from the national level to the European Community level. That is one practical way in which we could enhance the process of making the European Community accountable.

I have not spend much time talking about the Council of Ministers. The Minister of State talked about the role of the Standing Committees of the House of Commons. Clearly, those Committees must exercise much greater control over Government decisions. There must be a much greater understanding of the ways in which the decisions are taken in the Council of Ministers in order to render those decisions properly and effectively accountable in the House of Commons.

Ultimately, we need properly to recognise the role of democracy in the European Community. We must not simply criticise the institutions but must examine ways, perhaps at the next intergovernmental conference, to tackle the problems which were not properly faced at the last intergovernmental conference to put in place real democratic reform in Europe.

Mr. Marlow: The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) and I will have to agree to differ about the European Parliament. An effective European Parliament with effective powers exist when there is a European nation state. I do not believe that we have a nation state of Europe, that we should have a nation state of Europe or that the people want a nation state of Europe. Times and circumstances may change. If they do, there may be a case for a European Parliament with some of the powers which the hon. Member for Ashfield would like it to have.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Which is the nation state of the United Kingdom?

6.30 pm

Mr. Marlow: The simple answer is two words: the "United Kingdom".

I wish to dispatch a few small red herrings. First, I and my hon. Friends who are referred to as Euro-sceptics are not anti-European. We are not against the single market. We are very much in favour of it. We believe that within the single market the United Kingdom can take the lead and be prosperous. Secondly, we oppose the institutional provisions of the Maastricht treaty and believe that they are the most significant and important part of it. We oppose them not necessarily because they are wrong for Britain—although we believe that they are wrong for Britain—but because they are wrong for Europe.

Europe has not reached the stage at which it wants a central Government. The treaty seeks to impose a central Government on Europe. It is the ambition of Mr. Delors, President Mitterrand and Chancellor Kohl to impose their blueprint of a European union on Europe before it realises what has happened and before they have moved from the European scene.

If the Maastricht treaty is imposed on Europe, it will be bad not only for Britain but for Europe, because it will be unstable. It will try to do things in a way that is unaccountable and will cause resentment, stress and strife among the European nations which make up the European Community. It is for those reasons, not because we are anti-European, that we oppose the treaty. We feel that it is damaging to both Europe and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Knapman: My hon. Friend will be aware that some people suggest that the treaty is a decentralising measure. Admittedly, Chancellor Kohl in the *Financial Times* said the opposite. Perhaps the thought that the treaty can mean all things to all people is its strength.

Mr. Marlow: I shall deal with that point later. The difficulty—or, as my hon. Friend would say, the strength—of the treaty is that everyone can say that it satisfies his requirements. Everyone looks at the treaty from a different angle, through a different pair of glasses and from a different perspective.

When one reads the treaty on any subject, there are about 15 different routes through it. Some of those routes are blocked by other aspects of the treaty. Some of those routes are not blocked. There is a problem with the social chapter in the treaty. The Government have said that we must exclude the social chapter——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The hon. Gentleman should refer to the institutions of the Community. He is becoming somewhat Second Readingish. If he will stick to the amendment, it will be useful to the Committee, and will enable other hon. Members to speak. The social chapter has already been discussed and will be discussed in the future. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would stick to the amendments.

Mr. Marlow: I accept your point entirely, Mr. Lofthouse. We are dealing with the powers that the treaty gives to the institutions of the Community to take action on the social protocol, even if it is excluded.

Mr. Garel-Jones: As Chancellor Kohl has been prayed in aid yet again by those who believe that the objective of the Maastricht treaty is to create a super-state, I wish to remind the Committee and my hon. Friend what Chancellor Kohl said in Oxford on 11 November:

> "We have not laid the foundation stone with Maastricht for a European superstate . . . we have committed ourselves to a Europe constructed on the principle of unity in diversity."

Mr. Marlow: I might be in difficulty with you, Mr. Lofthouse, if I followed my right hon. Friend's point, because he was not referring to the institutions of the Community. I can reassure my right hon. Friend, although I am not prepared for it, that Chancellor Kohl has said many things about the European Community. Rather as the treaty is all things to all men, Chancellor Kohl is all things to all men.

Mr. Bill Walker: This group of amendments covers the institutions of the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament. My hon. Friend will recognise that, if many of the amendments were accepted by the Committee, they would effectively do what the majority of those who have spoken in the debate want. They would remove the additional powers that are provided and destroy the treaty.

Mr. Marlow: I am sure that my hon. Friend has a valid and interesting point, on which other hon. Members will comment later.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In case you call me to order, Mr. Lofthouse, I promise that I will not pursue this line of argument much further. However, my hon. Friend will have noticed—this is connected with the institutions—that a group of Members on the Conservative Benches believe that the treaty is a communist conspiracy, and a group of Members on the Opposition Benches believe that it is a capitalist conspiracy.

It is neither. The treaty is what we choose to make of it. It is my belief that, on the basis of the treaty, my hon. Friend and I, from this side of the House, will be able to make the contribution that we want to make, and others will seek to make the contribution that they wish to make.

Mr. Marlow: Again, I am not sure how my right hon. Friend's remarks relate to the amendments, but they obviously do, Mr. Lofthouse, because you have not ruled him out of order. I have given way twice to my right hon. Friend, and I shall be happy to give way to him again, because this is an important matter which relates to the amendments.

Why have the Government seen fit to involve the European Parliament—which the Government do not hold in particularly high esteem and to which they do not want to give certain powers—in defence, foreign policy and judicial and home affairs?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I apologise to my hon. Friend for not responding to that point in my speech. He is right that the European Parliament has a consultative role on the pillars. That does not include defence. However, the decisions are for the Governments. The European Parliament already has a consultative role under the Single European Act and European political co-operation of which, as my hon. Friend knows, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is so staunchly in favour.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend is not being completely forthcoming to the Committee. He knows the treaty pretty well. He will find that the European Parliament is mentioned in many capacities in which it has not been mentioned before. It is mentioned to a far greater extent, and is given far more scope than previously, in foreign affairs, defence, home affairs and judicial affairs.

Mr. Garel-Jones: It does not have scope in defence, but it has scope in common foreign and security policy, which builds on European political co-operation under the Single European Act. It does not have scope in home/interior/justice affairs, because those matters have only just been included in the treaty. The European Parliament has the right to be consulted. That is precisely the same right as it has under European political co-operation in the Single European Act.

Mr. Marlow: I do not want to bore the Committee, but article J.7 says:

"The Presidency shall consult the European Parliament on the main aspects and the basic choices of the common foreign and security policy and it shall ensure that the views of the European Parliament are duly taken into consideration."

So the European Parliament is to be consulted, and its views will be taken into account at central European level. It continues:

"The European Parliament shall be kept regularly informed by the Presidency and the Commission of the development of the Union's foreign and security policy."

That is not how it was written before. It is an extension of the competence of the European Parliament on those issues. People should be well aware of that.

Mr. Garel-Jones: This is such an important point that it is important to clarify it. I know that my hon. Friend would not wish to mislead the Committee. First, the common foreign and security policy is not a common defence policy. The defence dimension of Europe is contained within the Western European Union, which is outside the European union and the treaty on European union. Secondly, the power to be consulted already exists under European political co-operation. I know that my hon. Friend would not wish to mislead the Committee on that matter.

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend the Minister of State has said that security policy is not defence policy —it seems rather like defence policy to me.

Mr. Cash: On the European Parliament and increasing its powers, has my hon. Friend seen the Maastricht referendum petition on page 9 of Saturday's edition of *The Sun*, which went out to 4 million people in towns and villages throughout the land? That gives them the opportunity, within the rules of the House, to sign a petition and to ensure that they express their views on the importance of a referendum.

Mr. Marlow: I do not normally get beyond page 3 of *The Sun*, but it is appropriate that the public should be consulted again through a referendum, given the massive increase in powers to European institutions proposed by the treaty.

The problem within the Conservative party, and the difference between my right hon. Friend the Minister of State and myself, is that the Government say—of the powers given to institutions in the treaty—that it will not happen: subsidiarity will rule, everything is under control and we should not worry, as things are moving in our direction. When I read the treaty, I find that the powers that it gives to institutions are very real, and I am concerned that Community institutions will take advantage of them to reduce the powers available to the House.

Instead of a group of sovereign nations co-operating at European level, the new powers given to European institutions—I am looking at you, Mr. Lofthouse, as I speak, because you are looking at me, so I keep saying the words "European institutions" in case you take the view that I am going off the track—will enable them to turn it from a free-standing group of sovereign and independent nation states into a European union and a unitary state. That is what many Conservative Members are concerned should not happen.

I read the treaty and believe that it means what it says. My right hon. Friend on the Front Bench reads the treaty and says that it will not happen.

Some years ago, there was a treaty called the Single European Act. At the time, we were told that the powers that it gave to Community institutions were nothing to worry about. We were told that the treaty was all about the single market and free trade with Europe, and we were all in favour of those. Since then, we have discovered—and been told continually during this debate—that the major powers available to be surrendered, were surrendered at the time of the Single European Act.

Many years ago, at the time of the Single European Act, we were told that it was unimportant, whereas we are now told that it was vital and that the House conceded power through that Act. When debating powers to be passed to European institutions under the Maastricht treaty, we are told, "Relax, don't worry, things are coming in our direction—it will not happen."

Yet, if one reads the detail and sees the vast areas in which powers are being potentially transferred to the Commission, the European Parliament and other European institutions, one is bound to be cautious. If one values the powers of this House and the ability of this country to govern itself, one can come only to the conclusion that one must oppose the transfers of power within the treaty.

Another reason for opposing the treaty can be found by thinking back to the time of Maastricht, when the powers were negotiated. I am second to none in my admiration for my right hon. Friend, who was in a difficult situation. Everyone had come forward with proposals, which were not desired, suggested or required by the United Kingdom. In a way, he was ambushed by all the other European countries and by the European Commission: his action was defensive—damage limitation—and, in the circumstances, my right hon. Friend did a magnificent job.

Mr. Cash: Which right hon. Friend?

6.45 pm

Mr. Marlow: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

However, 15 months later, we are faced with the reality. Europe has changed. The requirements and desires of Europe with regard to co-operation are different from the desires of 15 months ago. The French have had a referendum, and only one third of the French people voted in favour of the treaty. The Danes had a referendum and voted against the treaty. Surely that points to the fact that we should have our own referendum. It concerns me that the future of the treaty is dependent on what the Danes

decide in a referendum and not on what we in Britain decide in a referendum. Is that not a matter of some concern to you, Mr. Lofthouse?

The other reason why we must be concerned about whether the powers given to European institutions will be used is because of the other countries in the European Community. Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg are not countries. They are provinces, but they want to be part of a country—for them, that country would be Europe. Italy is incapable of governing itself, and is desperate to have some form of government.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:

The Committee divided: Ayes 49, Noes 313.

Division No. 173] **[6.45 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Simpson, Alan
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Trimble, David
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maclennan, Robert
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm

Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman
Mr. David Lightbown.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: No. 28, in page 1, line 9, after 'II'. insert

'(provided that in the implementation of Articles 198(a), (b) and (c) on pages 54 and 55 of Cm 1934 concerning the Committee of the Regions, the 24 members and 24 alternate members of that Committee shall be drawn from elected local government representatives.)'.—*[Dr. John Cunningham.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 314, Noes 292.

Division No. 174] **[6.58 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Body, Sir Richard
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cran, James
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Sir George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hawksley, Warren
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*

Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sweeney, Walter
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilkinson, John
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith

Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Salmond, Alex
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Welsh, Andrew
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Hain: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Have you received any information about the grubby deal done by the Scottish and Welsh nationalists, who have sold out the interests of Wales and Scotland to support the Government on the amendment?

The First Deputy Chairman: I have heard nothing about any deals.

Mr. Winnick: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Will you confirm that, as the amendment has been passed, in due course there will be a Report stage?

The First Deputy Chairman: The hon. Gentleman has been here a long time and knows the procedure as well as I do.

Mr. Skinner: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. As the Prime Minister and nearly all leading Cabinet Ministers staked their position at Harrogate at the weekend and said that they would deliver the votes on Maastricht, would not the right and proper thing now be for the Government to resign? *[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Will hon. Members please take their seats?

The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has been in the House a long time and knows that that is not a matter for me.

Mr. Ian Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. Is it in order for a party that wishes us to make progress on the Maastricht Bill to provoke a long delay, which is what the Liberal party has done?

7.15 pm

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. We must now proceed to the next group of amendments.

Mr. George Robertson: I beg to move amendment No. 29, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert
'(except Article 3(b) on page 10 of Cm 1934 relating to the principle of subsidiarity.)'.

The First Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following amendments: No. 77, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(other than Article 3b)'.

No. 105, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 3b on page 10 of Cm 1934).'

No. 126, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article G B(5) on page 10 of Cm 1934).'.

No. 340, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except the second paragraph of Article 3b on page 10 of Cm 1934'.

Mr. Robertson: I am seeking to—*[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. Will hon. Members leaving the Chamber do so quitely so that we can continue with the business.

Mr. Robertson: As I was saying, and I may have to say again, amendment No. 29 is a probing amendment and we do not intend to push it to a Division.

We are debating a group of amendments entitled "Subsidiarity", so the debate is of acute importance, not just to the Government, but to the country and the European Community as a whole. I understand that the Foreign Secretary will not be present for the beginning of the debate, and I have received his apologies for that. I am sure that he has business outside the Chamber as he attempts to explain the Government's humiliating defeat to the outside world. However, later in the debate he will undoubtedly show the Committee the importance that he attaches to the concept of subsidiarity, which is not an isolated concept.

In this country, subsidiarity has much to do with the way in which we should take our own decisions. In that context, it is remarkable that this evening the Government have gone down to a stinging defeat on an issue of importance, both to the Bill and the treaty. They did so with the votes of the Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties behind them. It says much about the Government that they were willing to do a deal—the details of which we do not yet know—with those who seek to break up the Union

of the United Kingdom itself. They did so when they knew that they would be defeated, and that those votes would not be their salvation.

The incident tells us nothing new about the Scottish and Welsh nationalists, as we knew about their capabilities in that respect long before now. When the day comes, they will be judged in Scotland and Wales against their record of voting with the Government against an amendment that will make it possible for elected representatives of the people to represent this country on the European Committee of the Regions.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): Will the hon. Gentleman explain to the Committee what benefit even more weeks of delay on the discussion of the Bill—which is the effect of the amendment—will have on this country's reputation in Europe?

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is quite out of order.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman was not only quite out of order, but made a pathetic response to what has happened. I do not intend to test your tolerance any further, Mr. Lofthouse. If anyone imagines that the vote was about delay, they are completely wrong.

We are debating subsidiarity and coming to the kernel of the Government's contention that subsidiarity is important in Europe and that, as a concept in the Maastricht treaty, subsidiarity is of fundamental importance to the Government's achievements at Maastricht. The role of the Committee of the Regions will be a key part of the way that subsidiarity will be won. Therefore, there are no apologies from the Labour party for the decision that was taken.

Dr. Godman: To me as a Scots Member, the squalid behaviour exhibited by the Scottish nationalists came as no surprise. However, it might have been a salutary lesson to English Members of Parliament. Does not my hon. Friend agree that, no matter how vigorously the concept of subsidiarity is applied, it cannot arrest the growing centralisation of decision making among the central institutions of the European Community?

Mr. Robertson: I do not agree with my hon. Friend in that regard. Of course, I agree with him about the nationalists, and I agree that there could easily be a centralising influence in the European Community. I hope to deal with my hon. Friend's other points during my speech and to make the central part of my case the inability and unwillingness of the Government to deal with these serious matters.

Mr. Dalyell: Surely the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan), who is a pro-European, ought to understand that Opposition Members who are pro-European greatly resent the Government's attempt—this is part of their undoing—to have things à la carte. If they had agreed to the social chapter and to a proper regional policy they might not have suffered this humiliation. It is the idea of taking policy à la carte which creates such great resentment among those of us who have believed in Europe all our political lives.

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend is right. It is regrettable, but it is hardly surprising. The Government preach one thing and practise another—that is what is at the root of their problems, as I said last Thursday. If there were any willingness by the Government to seek consensus about this country's objectives in Europe—if there were anything more than an obsession with Conservative party unity—this country might be able to move forward together at a time when critical decisions will be taken in the Community.

The Government took nine months to look at the amendments on the Committee of the Regions and still had no positive proposals to put to the House, and that directly led to their humiliation this evening.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman's European credentials, in Scotland or anywhere else, are not in doubt. Does he agree that the nationalists' credentials are in doubt, as was clearly shown this evening? Will he press Ministers on the legal definition of subsidiarity? Like me, he will remember the long debates that we had on the legal definition of a thing called devolution, which was all things to all people. Is he not concerned that this is another similar lovely word? He wants things to work in Europe, so he will want this matter clarified, and I hope that he will press the Government on it.

Mr. Robertson: We are fortunate in this debate—we were unfortunate in the previous one in this respect—to have the Attorney General with us. The Lord Advocate, the equivalent Scottish Law Officer, is in the House of Lords, so he cannot join us at this stage, although I have a feeling that he may come under cross-examination when the Bill leaves this place.

I will have a few words to say about the legal definition of subsidiarity in a few moments. The nationalists' credentials, which I never trusted in the first place, have yet again been highlighted as fraudulent. It will be interesting to hear what explanations they come up with for the act of treachery in which they indulged.

The Foreign Secretary himself has said that the subsidiarity aspect of the treaty was a British achievement. That acheivement was one of the mechanisms whereby he and the Minister of State sought to buy off the rebellion which even then was going on in the Conservative party. It was the beads that were to be given to the Back-Bench natives, the totem around which they could all circle. It was the great victory for Thatcherism. It was the noble Lady herself who had set out on the mission to achieve subsidiarity, seeing it as a unique vehicle for bringing back the powers that she and others had given away to Brussels —bringing them firmly back to the heart of London, and no further.

The secret Conservative party briefing document entitled, "European Communities (Amendment) Bill Departmental Brief", marked confidential, which was handed to Opposition Members—to our great delight—talks about entrenching subsidiarity, speaking of "a unique British initiative". With that sense of understatement that is so well known in the Conservative party, it calls this

"a turning point in Community history".

The briefing says:

"subsidiarity's meaning, however, should be clear. Subsidiarity is the concept whereby action is only taken by the Community where objectives cannot be satisfactorily achieved by national Governments."

Here we come to the key to the Government's internal inconsistency: their obsession with national Governments and their lack of concern for anything else. Their definition markedly differs from that adopted in the treaty and in all

[Mr. Robertson]

the documentation from other Community countries. Indeed, it is contradicted by the Conservative central office briefing, which states:

"Britain has led the campaign for decisions to be taken as close as possible to the people whose lives they affect."

The Conservative party declares, therefore, that the concept was brought into the treaty for the very first time —legally justifiable, we are told, and designed to bring decisions right down to the people who will be affected by Community laws.

What is this great British achievement? What was achieved at Maastricht on behalf of the British people? Was it the triumph of the Thatcherite philosophy that says that everything must be dragged back from Brussels to national level? Was it the triumph of this Administration seeking to make social measures and environmental and regional policies purely national issues, taken away from the Community? That was what we were told, during the British presidency, was to be the objective of the British Government.

On the other hand, was the achievement something else entirely, something much deeper and more fundamental, as seen through the eyes of our Community partners?

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will the hon. Gentleman confirm that that is not entirely correct? It was always envisaged that certain aspects of these policies, particularly environmental policies, would need Community action, because it was recognised that certain actions taken in certain countries affect the population of other countries. It was the petty areas of harmonisation of Community laws that were objected to, not the areas that naturally needed common decisions.

Mr. Robertson: That is the common-sense position; it is not the position taken by the British Government, whose view of subsidiarity was that it would allow them to take back inconvenient policies—to repatriate them—but to leave other policies virtually untouched at European level. The Government made no secret of that. Ministers clearly said that they believed that environmental policy, especially majority voting on it, was to be opposed. They believed that it should be dealt with at national level, and their record on European environmental directives is so bad that it is evidence, if the hon. Gentleman wants evidence, for what I am saying. They made it clear, too, that social policy should be a matter for national Governments only—hence the absurd opt-out on social policy. Ministers also identified regional policy as suitable for repatriation to national level; they object to regional policy at home and violently oppose it in the European Community.

All those are areas which, as the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) says, should logically and practically be subject to Europewide action, but the British Government decided that it was better to take them back home, where they could impose their own narrow, reactionary policies.

Other people in the European Community held a view of subsidiarity wholly different from the British Government's. The Commission published a document in October 1992 in which it laid out its ideas about subsidiarity. They were, as Commission ideas usually are, enshrined in the thoughts published in the Edinburgh Council conclusions. It is interesting to note the Commission's view of subsidiarity. Conservative Members and some of my hon. Friends take the view that the Commission is the most centralising of all the European institutions.

Paragraph 1 of the Commission's document states:

"The subsidiarity principle as applied in the institutional context is based on a simple concept. The powers that a state or a federation of states wields in the common interests are only those which individuals, families, companies and local or regional authorities cannot exercise in isolation."

No pro or anti-Maastricht Member would disagree with that basic principle. The document continues:

"This common sense principle therefore dictates that decisions should be taken at the level closest to the ordinary citizen and that action taken by the upper echelons of the body politic should be limited."

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Robertson: I shall give way to my hon. Friend when I have completed my description of what the Commission says, because it is important and will let hon. Members see that the imagined threat from the Commission is not reflected in the Commission's view. The document continues:

"The first application in law of this essentially political principle"—

we should note the phrase "political principle"—

"is to be found in the relationship between some of the Member states and their regions where it takes various forms depending on their constitutional traditions. In the Community context subsidiarity means that the functions handed over to the Community are those which the member states at the various levels of decision making"—

sad to say, in this country that is represented by only one level—

"can no longer discharge satisfactorily. Any tranfer of powers must have due regard for national identity and the powers of the regions."

That is the Commission's definition of subsidiarity and how it should work in practice.

7.30 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson: The debate on this cluster of amendments relates to the very nature of the Community, the extent to which it will be centralised and to which powers will be devolved as closely as possible to the people. It is about the essence of the distribution of power in the Community. Is my hon. Friend puzzled that no member of the nationalist parties of Wales and Scotland has thought fit to attend the debate? Are they smarting from their wounds because of the result of the Division? Is it not rather an abdication of responsibility in an area in which those parties are expected to have expertise that no one has bothered to turn up for this vital debate?

Mr. Robertson: My hon. Friend's point is extremely good. However, he should not be surprised, in view of how those parties have voted and the fuss that they made today about subsidiarity in the Welsh Grand Committee in Cardiff. No wonder they are hiding. I cannot imagine how far they needed to go to hide, but they had to hide. Their absence from the debate should be a delight to us because it underlines the synthetic nature of their interest in the way in which the Community is developing and the central part that subsidiarity will play in the new relationships, not only between the member states after the Maastricht treaty comes into effect but between the regions of those states.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): My hon. Friend is famous for his generosity. I understood from the first part of his speech that subsidiarity is rather like the Holy Roman Empire—a piece of sublime mysticism and nonsense. However, he subsequently said that the Commission is not the centralising terrible beast that some of us think it to be. To refresh my memory, will he tell me the Opposition's stance on subsidiarity? Are we for it or agin it?

Mr. Robertson: We are for it. We called for it even before the Government thought about it. We believe in it and think that it is a good concept. I hope that that answers my hon. Friend. The answer is as open and straightforward as the design on my hon. Friend's tie.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Robertson: Perhaps my hon. Friend would wait for a moment.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am not wearing a tie.

Mr. Robertson: On the ground that my hon. Friend of long standing is not wearing a tie, I shall give way to her.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I have a simple question. Is my very good and hon. Friend standing by the Commission's definition of subsidiarity, which seems to suggest that only regional decisions will be delivered for individual states?

Mr. Robertson: If I had to choose from the definitions of subsidiarity in all the documents that are before me, I should choose the one by the Commission. It does not state that all power should lie with the regions. It states, as do all the Labour party documents, that Community decisions should be taken at the most appropriate level, which is the lowest and closest to the individual citizen. My hon. Friend and I would not disagree on that, although we may disagree on many other issues in the debate.

The real question is whether the Government pass any of the tests for the definition of subsidiarity, either in what they say, because they have claimed great enthusiasm for the concept of subsidiarity, or in practice, because, of course, the Government cannot simply be tested on their reckoning about the future of Europe. However, they can be easily, simply and devastatingly tested on their record in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Barnes: A problem arises about the concept of decisions being taken at an appropriate level. Although we all agree that that should be so, when Mussolini was an anarcho-syndicalist, he would have had one view of the appropriate level, but when he was Il Duce he would have had another view. We can all agree, but that tells us nothing.

Mr. Robertson: It tells us little in terms of rhetoric, and that is precisely the problem with the Government. As the Community moves towards closer integration, it is attempting to put more flesh on the idea that we should test each decision and each potential law against the principle that the policy should be implemented at the lowest practical level. I see nothing wrong with that. It may fail because at times the centralising instincts of some of the institutions will overcome common sense. At times Governments, such as that of the United Kingdom, will try, as they have demonstrated over the years, to take back powers that are more properly and sensibly exercised at European level.

Through the Community as a flexible political institution, which it has been in the past and will continue to be, we must try to work out a flexible method by which subsidiarity can be taken out of the statute books and treaties and made to work in political practice.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): My hon. Friend will agree that the attempts made so far to define subsidiarity do not clarify the matter at all. Surely we must return to specifics. Does my hon. Friend think that, for example, interest rate policy is best determined by the Bank of England in London or by a European central bank, wherever it may be?

Mr. Robertson: I admire my right hon. Friend's sentimentality about the idea that interest rate policies are determined by the Bank of England in Threadneedle street. Do we imagine that the Chancellor telephones the Governor of the Bank of England and transmits crucial decisions and that the decision is not made by people sitting around a table at the Bundesbank at its fortnightly meeting in Frankfurt?

The reality is that some of these decisions are taken out of our hands anyway. That will happen increasingly. I am the chairman of the British-German parliamentary group and I have a great admiration for Germany. If I have to choose between interest rates for the people I represent being set by German central bankers in Frankfurt or by European central bankers on whom there is a British influence, I have no doubt that I would choose to have them set at European level.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Robertson: I am beginning to learn that a debate such as this does not require one to prepare a speech. One has only to be prepared to stand at the Dispatch Box for three quarters of an hour answering everybody's questions. Again on the ground of sentimentality, I will give way.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman's last debating point indicated that one danger of subsidiarity —I agree with almost everything that he has said about it so far—is that the nation state can easily make it an excuse for a return of the veto under disguise.

Mr. Robertson: There is that danger. There are dangers in centralisation and repatriation. As I said in last Thursday's debate, at this time in Europe's history there is the danger of beggar-my-neighbour policies—such as competing interest rates—being pursued by European countries in general, and the attitude towards the repatriation of individual policies that are not liked is not in the interests of the people whom we seek to represent.

The greater interest must be regarded as important. That is why the concept of subsidiarity is so significant. I dare say I shall have the support of a member of the Government's Front Bench in that, when the Foreign Secretary eventually returns from explaining away the Government's defeat. When the Community eventually adopts policies and puts flesh on the concept, we shall see where the real balance lies.

Mr. Dykes: As vice-chairman of the British-German parliamentary group, of which the hon. Gentleman is chairman, I believe that he was right in his comments about the German effect and the inevitability of accepting it. However, other factors were involved. The action of the

[Mr. Dykes]

United States Federal Reserve is one of them, though perhaps that was less influential at the time in question. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it was a pity that the Germans also did not consider themselves to be operating within the ERM framework, having regard to the whole group of member states and not just their own requirements? Even for internal purposes, the Germans needed lower interest rates at that particular time.

Mr. Robertson: Countries are increasingly acting in their national interest. Some right hon. and hon. Members and others outside Parliament think that they should do so. However, that world of speculation and competition is not one that produces an ordered society at a domestic, European or world level. If there is to be a measure of economic and political stability in future, there must be management in the system. That is why the concept of subsidiarity must be seen in the broadest context. Decisions must be taken at a European level where they make sense, and we must integrate at a level and to a level that makes sense.

At the same time, we must ensure that national identities and decision making are protected, where that is sensible and appropriate.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No.

Mr. Wilkinson: I remind the hon. Gentleman that I am also a member of the British-German parliamentary group.

Mr. Robertson: It is the largest in the House, apart from the British-American group, so almost everyone could intervene on that basis. There is a limit to my sentimental generosity. I want to make a little progress, so that other right hon. and hon. Members may have an opportunity to participate in this important debate. I can hardly complain of long speeches by the hon. Members for Stafford (Mr. Cash), who is not in his place, and for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet), and then take up a large amount of the Committee's time on my own account.

The question is whether the Government, who have made such a song and dance about subsidiarity, really believe in it at a European level, or simply see it as a way of taking back powers to a national and, in particular, to a London level. Are they willing to go along with Community partners in a move forward in decentralisation? Do the Government really believe that subsidiarity is an appropriate concept at European level, and does that have any implications for what happens nationally?

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Vaz) produced a handy document for the Labour party that is most illuminating and which I commend to Conservative Members. It presents a list of legislation introduced by Conservative Governments since 1979 that altered local government responsibilities and functions. They range from the Justices of the Peace Act 1979 and Education Act 1980 to the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act, Local Government Act and Local Government (Finance) Act of 1992—all of which had an impact on local government in Britain.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East performed a great service to the House and the country, because his list of centralising measures shows that, since 1979, Conservative Governments have been responsible for 145 separate pieces of legislation that centralised power and diminished local government powers in every respect —that from a party which says that it is in favour of subsidiarity and which claims with pride that it favours decisions being taken as close as possible to the people whose lives those decisions affect. The evidence stands against the Government.

7.45 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Gentleman confuses layers of bureaucratic government with democracy as such. Much of the legislation passed by Conservative Governments has given practical local power to local people, whether it be in relation to the administration of their schools or a whole range of other matters. Merely because some local councillors have rather less direct power whereas some school governors have more, for example, is not a sufficient basis for making a wholesale attack on the Government as a centralising Administration.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. Gentleman is a reasonable man, so he just presents the party line, tongue firmly in cheek. There is a lot of inventiveness about that legislation. The poll tax was one piece of legislation buried deep in my hon. Friend's list. The hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) knows, and every Conservative councillor would admit—almost publicly, never mind privately—that more and more decisions have been taken away from local government and placed in the hands of central Government officials. The Government have followed that course since 1979.

That list of 145 pieces of legislation is just one measurement of centralisation. The reality for local authorities, from the Shetlands to Kent, suggests that power has been taken from the local level and centralised in London, with the effect of reducing efficiency, effectiveness and democracy.

If the Government could argue that their concept of subsidiarity in the United Kingdom has produced beneficial results, they might be able to make a presentable case for it. They might be able to argue that the economic miracle in this country was such as to suggest that Whitehall centralisation produces the best decision. They might be able to argue that running Scotland with a handful of Conservative Members of Parliament but the whole machinery of government working for them has produced an ideal relationship between Scotland, England and Wales. However, not one Conservative Member would have the brass neck to suggest that that is the case.

Recession may be gripping the whole of Europe, but we still have the fastest rising unemployment rate. Growth levels throughout Europe may be down, but ours is still one of the longest-lived reduced growth records in the whole Community. Recession may be all about us, but it has certainly lasted longer and deeper in this country than anywhere else. Perhaps we can learn a few lessons from the way in which others have interpreted subsidiarity in their countries.

The expansion and economic success achieved by France derived largely from its experimental move away from the centralisation of the old fourth and fifth republics. The French now admit that decentralisation played a major part in the renaissance of the economy. The

federal structure created, by and large, by the allies after the war has been at the root of German economic success; the fact that its economy is not dominated by one part of the country has given Germany an enormous advantage over other, more centralised nations.

In Spain, a unique form of devolution has taken place. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) pays only fleeting visits to our debates, because I am sure that he would agree with me about the Spanish devolution to the autonomous regions. Of course, the Minister of State is a great expert on Spain—not just the language—but some of the economic renaissance, under a socialist Government, took place at the same time as devolution to administrative regions. Spain is not merely preaching subsidiarity to the outside world, and enshrining vague phrases; it is taking action on an internal basis, and trying to bring power and decision making closer to the people.

The constitutional changes currently taking place in Belgium are designed specifically to relate to internal tensions in that country, but also to enshrine the concept of decentralisation in a country with a much more successful economy than ours. The hon Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) is again absent for the second stage of this great debate. He was keen to attack Italy, but many of the problems facing the Italian republic derive from central domination of every part of the country's economy and society.

Decentralisation works, at both European and national level. Only this country sems to interpret its economic failure in this way, assuming that it need do nothing about subsidiarity at home while wandering around the continent preaching it as a European Community perspective.

Mr. Butterfill: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Robertson: No; I have given way already.

Mr. Butterfill: It is about my "brass neck".

Mr. Robertson: I am sure that the glow of satisfaction experienced by the hon. Gentleman after polishing his brass neck will comfort him as he waits to be called to speak in the debate.

My hon. Friends have asked whether subsidiarity is a definable legal concept, or a purely political one. There are mixed views about that. Madam Speaker's counsel, who gave evidence to the Select Committee on European Legislation, has a special form of dry wit, which is reflected in the documents that he submits to Committees and to which the Attorney-General should perhaps aspire. He tends—rightly—to stray beyond the strict legal brief, and to pass comment on the politics of European Community legislation. I think that we all gain considerably from his wise advice. In his evidence to the Select Committee, he said:

"Lawyers, whether they are individually pro-Community or anti-Community, are showing a quite unusual degree of unity in categorising subsidiarity as a principle of policy which is far too imprecise to have any clear legal effect."

Having said that from the lawyers' point of view, counsel went on:

"Non-lawyers are having to make the best they can of proposed Article 3b"—

as it then was—

"and the best is to contend that the definition (or description) of subsidiarity in that Article will operate essentially as a political restraint on the Commission when proposing and the Council when considering draft legislation."

I think that those wise words should be taken on board, and I am sure that the Minister agrees with me. The European Community is a legal entity in one respect: it has a treaty base, a Court of Justice, laws, and—thanks to Baroness Thatcher—enforcement powers. Under the Maastricht treaty, it can impose huge levies on any recalcitrant nation state that chooses not to obey the European diktat. At the same time, it is made up of 12 independent, sovereign, self-confident nation states, which do not themselves agree that they are part of a rigid, centralising organisation, and which regularly assert themselves in order to prove that.

Over the years, that has been the nature of the Community. It would therefore appear that—despite the encyclopaedic detail that has emerged from the conclusions of the Edinburgh summit, which is as dense as anything that the Community has produced—it will continue to be a political concept, implemented by politicians. Let us hope, however, that those politicians will agree to the basic tenets of the philosophy that they are pursuing.

I was interested by the Minister's interpretation of subsidiarity in this quasi-legal context. On 13 January, in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), he said:

"Subsidiarity means distinguishing those areas which are the responsibility of nation states from areas that may be the Commission's responsibility."—[*Official Report*, 13 January 1993; Vol. 216, c. 911.]

I am sure that the Minister agrees that, even in the context of what Conservative central office says, that is a remarkably restrictive view. I am not certain whether he had resigned at that point—whether, that is, he had been liberated from the constraint of reading from other people's bits of paper. We shall wait for the Foreign Secretary to enlighten us later.

I heartily commend the Library's briefing document on further developments in subsidiarity. In its conclusions, it makes the following sensible point:

"As for the present, when the Commission submits proposals for legislation to the Council, these proposals are already accompanied by a justification for action in accordance with subsidiarity."

That, then, will be the test. The Commission will have to explain every piece of legislation in the light of the developing concept of subsidiarity.

Mr. Denzil Davies: My hon. Friend has studied the matter far more than I have. He mentioned the Commission. He will have noticed that article 3b does not mention the Commission; it talks about the Community being subject to subsidiarity. Am I to take it that other Community institutions, as well as the Commission, are subject to subsidiarity rule?

Mr. Robertson: My right hon. Friend understands that, and I understand it. It must be at the base of all decision making. I crave forgiveness if I have concentrated too much on the Commission, which is usually regarded—often wrongly—as the most centralising of the Community institutions, and whose view, like the view that we take of what it will do in future, may therefore be more relevant at present. The concept of reducing the level of decision making to the level closest to the citizen—the most

[Mr. Robertson]

appropriate level—must apply to every Community institution if it is to work at all, and in that regard I am entirely in accord with my right hon. Friend.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the concept of subsidiarity need not be confined to the European Community? Some of us find it hard to understand why the Government appear to attach so much importance to it in this context, while setting their face against an extra-Community forum involving the protection of human rights in Europe. Why do they refuse to allow fundamental rights and freedoms, guaranteed by the European convention on human rights, to be enforced in our domestic courts? That is the reverse of subsidiarity. The Government persistently seek to ensure that our citizens must take the long, expensive route to Strasbourg.

Mr. Robertson: That has been the thrust of my speech: the Government preach subsidiarity, but, at a domestic and EC level, they practise the opposite. I suppose that, after 14 years, we should hardly be surprised by that, but it is important that we do not allow the Tory party to get away with its propaganda that subsidiarity is a unique Tory achievement. It is nothing of the sort.

8 pm

The means of deciding subsidiarity is important. It is all very well to say that the Commission should have to pass a test for each piece of legislation that it proposes, but, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) said, the Council and Parliament must agree tests.

I was impressed by the evidence that Professor Helen Wallace gave to the Foreigh Affairs Select Committee earlier this year, in which she dealt with that point. I know that the Minister favours a committee of wise men to decide subsidiarity. We shared a platform on International Women's Day, from which he enunciated that concept; it was as inappropriate then as it is today. Professor Wallace, who is the foremost authority on Community affairs in the United Kingdom, rightly says that the process must be more public than is being contemplated.

The Government hid all decision making in the far recesses of the government machine, but there must be a much more public process to define subsidiarity and what tests will be applied to the legislation. She said in her evidence:

"But there are some very important issues about the extent of detail of Community legislation, or the appropriateness of Community legislation, in those kinds of areas where one may have to rely much more on the normal legislative processes, plus whatever national parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms there may be, which clearly will have to be beefed up in all Member States, to try to sort out the ridiculous from the sensible."

From a non-parliamentarian, who I believe has some connection with politics in her spare time, that is one of the best definitions:

"sorting out the ridiculous from the sensible."

Perhaps in this lengthy debate we might bear that in mind.

Subsidiarity is a good concept and a valuable principle —but only if it works in practice. It is good for Europe and is a step forward for which the Labour party argued strongly and wanted even before the Conservative party discovered that it existed. It cannot be confined to a European ghetto—ideal for resolving Whitehall-Brussels disputes but seen against a centralist closed British system inside our country. Subsidiarity—the principle, as the Birmingham declaration said, of nearness of decision making and decentralised decision taking—is right for Europe and essential for the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Thank you, Dame Janet, for calling me so early in the debate. This is my first contribution to the debate on the Maastricht treaty. I hope that you will agree that variety adds interest; it remains to be seen whether it adds wisdom.

It may help to explain where I stand and why I thought that it might be helpful to intervene. The Europhiles, if I may so call them, consider me unsound and the Eurphobes regard me as totally unreliable. That seems to me an ideal position from which to join the debate, as my central purpose is to warn both sides of the debate that subsidiarity does not help either cause. I must admit to having studied subsidiarity for a long time, academically outside the House and as a politician within it. It is invariably misunderstood or, more mischievously, deliberately misdefined. I conclude that subsidiarity is at best neutral and at worst downright dangerous.

It is worth considering why subsidiarity has become an issue which so many people hold up as an answer to problems. It strikes me as yet another worthy attempt—I do not mean that disparagingly—to placate critics, who in this case are those who worry about the societal implications of the further development of an economic community. The trouble with the approach of trying to placate those at the margins is that it does not get one far. One is merely trying to smooth things over.

The Euro-visionaries, if I may call them that without being unkind, have a classic economic model that they are seeking to develop—I accept much of what they say—in the belief that it will make all our lives better. And so it may, but like all economic models it keeps colliding with social reality—in this case, a deep-seated sense of who we are. That is a very powerful concept. The typical response of enthusiasts when reality bumps into their model is to try to make the real world fit their model, in the mistaken belief that if they blur the edges of the model often enough, all will be well. History teaches us otherwise.

When people started to object to the impact of economic integration on their societal separation as nation states, the Euro-visionaries conjured up the concept of subsidiarity and said, "Here is a way of placating those people who are concerned."

There are two snags to that: first, no one can agree what subsidiarity means; secondly, it is a means of papering over the cracks which keep appearing when we should be trying to fill the cracks and stop further cracks developing.

The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) referred to the Library research note. I did the same, but it seems that we have a difficulty agreeing what subsidiarity means. Page 16, rather nicely, says:

"There is a plethora of literature on subsidiarity with few common strands except that no-one yet knows exactly how it will be applied in the context of European Union."

That says it all. The document says that subsidiarity has a long history, starting, it suggests, with Aristotle, going on via Locke and Stuart Mill to Pope Pius XI.

Mr. Robertson: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman's scepticism about Government policy extends to railway privatisation, but there is much literature about privatisation and much about railways. There is no clear

idea, even inside Government, how on earth the privatisation of British Rail will fit in practice, but that does not seem to have deterred Transport Ministers from proceeding with that experiment.

Mr. Wilshire: I would love to beat the hon. Gentleman about the head and tell him why rail privatisation is a splendid idea, but I have no doubt that you, Dame Janet, would rule me out of order, so the best that I can do is to stick with subsidiarity. The hon. Gentleman may then come to a different conclusion about my views on Government policy.

I was trying to say that the only thing on which we can agree is that there is no definition on which we can agree. Subsidiarity has a long history; so does prostitution, but that does not make prostitution a particularly good idea.

Mr. Barnes: Is it not the case that different arguments can produce different attitudes about whether or not we are in favour of privatisation? However, subsidiarity is presented to us as something with which we must all agree, whatever we want from it. It sounds like something compelling, when in fact it ends up being meaningless because there is nothing specific about it—unlike privatisation.

Mr. Wilshire: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would like to finish my speech, because that is precisely the direction in which I am heading. We do not agree on very much, but perhaps tonight, or at breakfast tomorrow, he will reflect on the fact that for once he has agreed with a Conservative Member. I recommend that he does it more often.

The hon. Gentleman rightly said that subsidiarity can be all things to all people, but if we are to pursue the concept of subsidiarity, we must understand it. There is no point in saying that we all have different definitions. We have to try to solve the problem to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Having been told that the Maastricht treaty was a good idea, I naively thought that I had better consult it. I thought that if anything could help, surely the treaty could. Article A, which has already been mentioned, states that decisions must be

"taken as closely as possible to the citizen."

That is a splendid idea, but unless that article means that all decisions will be taken by parish councils—which heaven forbid—it takes us no further forward in deciding who takes what decision where.

Article 3b deals with the justification for Community action. It states that the Community shall take action if

"action cannot sufficiently be achieved by Member States"

or if it is

"better achieved by the Community."

They are statements of the obvious. They tell us that different things are best done at different levels, but that is all. We knew that before we started.

If one listens to the various definitions and reads the Library document, one theme emerges in all the attempts to define subsidiarity, however different the attempts may be. The common strand that lurks and which has been touched on already is that there is a sense of different levels of activity. We need to hang on to that idea and think about it to see whether we can use it to discover what subsidiarity really means.

The issue of the sense of levels keeps bobbing up in the debate, but no one usually speaks about it logically. It is an instinctive rather than a rational concept. The sense of different levels is deep inside each and every one of us, not merely in the mind of the occasional visionary or academic who will explain it to us. It is crucial that we try to understand what the deep sense of different levels inside us is; if we can understand that, we can begin to understand what the debate is really about rather than what some people would like us to think it is about.

The instinctive sense inside us is a societal sense. It has nothing to do with economics. We have a sense of different levels out of a social rather than an economic view. We instinctively believe that this sense of different levels has something to do with organisation. In other words, we instinctively feel that it has something to do with government. More important, the sense of levels inside us is deeply territorial. Anyone who doubts that need only pop across to Bosnia and see what is happening in the name of controlling one's own territory.

Sir Russell Johnston: The hon. Gentleman is making a very interesting speech. As he is talking about the territorial nature of subsidiarity, will he risk agreeing with me that the federal represents entrenched subsidiarity?

Mr. Wilshire: It might or it might not. It depends. If the hon. Gentleman asks me as an academic, he will get that type of answer. If he asks me as a politician, I shall later risk saying exactly what I think. However, if I am asked as an academic, I can only repeat my first answer. I ask the hon. Gentleman to be content with that and to wait. I understand what he means.

The sense of levels is highly territorial and we have to get to grips with the fact that it is also instinctively hierarchical. We instinctively understand that the different levels are stacked one on top of the other.

Mr. Wilkinson: My hon. Friend is making an interesting and thoughtful speech. I am fascinated—I am sure that the whole House is—by his definition of the epistemology of subsidiarity. However, on the subject of levels, is it not a fact that prima facie the Community will have competence in the areas set aside for Community action by the treaty itself and will have precedence over national parliaments in the pursuit of what the Community regards as Community objectives? Is it not a fact that the sole arbiter of the level at which decisions are to be taken will not be the supreme court of Parliament here at Westminster but the European Parliament in Brussels, over which we have no jurisdiction?

8.15 pm

Mr. Wilshire: My hon. Friend touches beautifully on the point which exercises the minds of people as they argue the issue. In return, I am trying to make the point that understanding subsidiarity will not add or detract from that point of view but will tell us merely that things should be done at different levels. The question is at which level is the very political issue that my hon. Friend highlighted. I am inclined to agree that there is a problem.

I return to the question of what subsidiarity might arise from. In a phrase, I believe that we are debating how society instinctively organises itself.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), who is a distinguished classicist, used the word "epistemology". In my ignorance, I am unaware of the meaning of that word and

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

wonder whether my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire), who clearly understood it, could enlighten me.

Mr. Wilshire: I hoped that I had got away with that, but my right hon. Friend has now embarrassed me into saying that I ignored it because I did not know what my hon. Friend was talking about. Will my hon. Friend enlighten me?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Is it a new word?

Mr. Wilshire: It was a new word to me, but as to whether it was a new word for the English, Greek or Latin dictionaries, for the moment I pass. No doubt my mailbag will tell me that I am an ignoramus and put me right in due course. We have to focus not on such words but on the emotional problem of what society thinks that it is.

If we have a sense of hierarchy, with different things being done at different levels, we must decide what the levels are and what should be done at each level. The debate will then tend to focus on doing things at different levels and whether we have got the level right or wrong. Having thought the issue through at some length, I believe that society has seven levels and that we all belong to each of them. The debate on subsidiarity must then be about which of the seven levels particular things must be done at.

Hon. Members may wonder what on earth an academic discourse about different levels has to do with subsidiarity. The answer is that each level is discrete. For example, one of the levels is a household. One cannot have a household inside a household: there is either a household or there is not. Another of the levels is the nation state. By definition, one cannot have a nation state inside a nation state. If we are to discuss issues which bear on a distinct level of society called the nation state, we must understand it. If we try to redefine it, we are striking at the instinctive sense of how people think about themselves.

Another important aspect of the sense of levels is that, having worked through the way in which society structures itself instinctively, one quickly discovers that there is a distinct and different focus at each level.

A couple of examples will make my point. I sense that there is a level in the structure which is instinctively about the delivery of local services. We argue at length about what local government is, but all hon. Members would agree that we sensibly leave the emptying of rubbish bins to whichever level is responsible for local services. Similarly, if we want to resolve the problem of the hole in the ozone layer, there is only one level that can do that —the whole world. There is no point in the EC Commission trying to solve the problem of the hole in the ozone layer because the rest of the world has something to do with it.

In the structure of levels, there is very much a sense of doing things in the right place. What does that tell us about subsidiarity? If subsidiarity is used—the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) made this point well—in the context in which we are discussing it, it is a political concept. Let us suppose that the Committee accepts my notion of a hierarchy of levels and accepts that each level has a distinct, separate and correct focus in the instinctive order of things.

If, through political expediency, we try to fudge the edges of the problem and to make the real world fit the model—and if as politicians we use a concept called subsidiarity to try to do things at the lowest level, to quote what many have said, when the lowest level is not the correct level according to the instinctive way in which society organises itself—we have a recipe for disaster. That is what concerns me about the whole concept.

Within the concept of levels, by far the most powerful level is the nation state. There is no point in beating about the bush and we cannot alter that. The most deep-seated of all levels in society is the nation state. Anybody who does not believe me need only go to the nearest churchyard or war cemetery to discover that more people have been killed defending that sense of territory, which is what we are talking about, than for any other reason. The economic modellers of the EC might wish it otherwise—although I believe that that is why they started the EC in the first place—but the most powerful of all levels is that of the nation state.

As I said when I was trying to draw out my point about that sense, the feeling is deeply territorial. Whether we like it or not, we have within us a concept of the nation state. The definition and the distinctive focus of the nation state is, above all else, to defend its territory and to protect the edges of it. Anything—even an economic model for the best of purposes, described as the economic betterment of the whole of Europe—which nibbles at that sense of national sovereignty is bound to cause trouble.

I fear that subsidiarity is being used as a means of blurring the edges so that we can shuffle a few things about in the hope that the problem will go away. I do not mind if people want to try that. My message is simply that that sense will not go away. It can neither be legislated nor reasoned away. It is there and it is very powerful.

I conclude at the end of this thought process that, although subsidiarity is an interesting subject and although it has a valid contribution, I fear that it offers no cure to my party if my party is using it as a way in which to prevent itself from tearing itself apart. Valid as the concept of subsidiarity is, all it does confirm that there is a hierarchy of levels, that different things happen at different levels, and that social harmony will be achieved only by doing the right thing at the right level. Subsidiarity will take us that far.

It is most important to understand what subsidiarity does not do. In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), I point out that it does not help us to define the territories. If we agree on subsidiarity, on its definition and on this and that, we are still no further forward with the whole problem of the territories aspect of each level.

We can say that we must do things at the right level or at the best level, but subsidiarity does not help us one iota in defining what is to be done where. The concept is silent on that. What is best done by the nation state, for example, does not define a nation state's territory. We can have a long argument about whether the United Kingdom ceases to be the nation state, but we shall still have no sense of the territory. Subsidiarity is neutral on that. If subsidiarity is used by politicians to force the doing of particular things at a level lower than the optimum level at which the thing is sensibly done, in the way in which society organises itself, the concept of subsidiarity becomes downright dangerous.

Let us talk about subsidiarity by all means, but let us not be tempted to see it as a quick fix. If we see it as a quick fix, we do so at our peril. As was said earlier, subsidiarity

is essentially a political concept. If it is used to try to redefine how society sees itself, and if we are really trying to redefine the role of society, we shall live to rue the day.

Dr. Godman: I too have difficulties with the concept of subsidiarity and with its application. With the treaty, we are experiencing the growing centralisation of decision making in the central institutions of the European Community. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), I cannot believe that even the most vigorous application of article 3b can arrest that continuing centralising process.

In its fourth report, the Select Committee on European Legislation said:

"The key question is whether the Maastricht treaty does or does not make the Community more centralist".

My argument is that the treaty encourages the process of centralisation. As such, it totally ignores the concept and process of federalism.

"The Oxford English Dictionary" defines "centralise" as follows:

"1 . . . to come together at a centre; to form a centre; to concentrate . . . 2 . . . to bring to a centre, locate in a centre, make central; *esp.* to concentrate (administrative powers) in a single head or centre, instead of distributing them among local departments; to subject to centralisation."

That is what the treaty will bring about. The same dictionary defines "federalise" as follows:

"To decentralise; to take from the central authority and hand over to federal bodies in the state, or to federal states in a union."

Hon. Members should give up the label of the "European Economic Community". We are talking about the European union. The treaty does nothing, even with the application of subsidiarity, to devolve power from the centre. No one can claim that with article 3b we shall move even surreptitiously along the path of federalisation of institutions and decision making.

In our earlier debate on the institutions of the Commission, of the Parliament and of the Council, we acknowledged that under the treaty there will be a shift in the distribution of power among those central institutions. The Minister of State has acknowledged that, as has the Secretary of State on a number of occasions.

The Select Committee on European Legislation also referred to the less than radical shift in the distribution of power among the central institutions. On page xxxiv of the fourth report, it states:

"The main changes lie, patently—in the changes in procedure discussed in relation to the Commission: the Council is the principal loser in that wherever the co-decision procedure applies the Council cannot (even by unanimity as under the co-operative procedure) force through a measure to which the European Parliament will not assent."

No one can deny that that is a shift in the power relations between those two institutions.

8.30 pm

The European Court of Justice is another central institution which must grow in power over the next few years. I appreciate that we will discuss the European Court of Justice under the group of amendments headed by amendment No. 32, but, there can be no genuine analysis of the concept of subsidiarity without passing reference to the European Court of Justice. As the concept of subsidiarity is in the treaty, it is potentially justiciable. The European Court of Justice must therefore be involved in determining what comes under the doctrine of subsidiarity.

The European Court of Justice is already a supreme court vis-a-vis the 13 legal systems in the 12 member states. In that respect, the Scottish system has equal status with the English and Welsh system. The European Court of Justice has overturned legislation passed by this Parliament in recent years. In that respect, I refer to the Merchant Shipping Act 1988, which contained a provision that was unacceptable to that supreme court. The House of Commons had to shift ground, not the European Court of Justice.

The European Court of Justice is a powerful central institution. I submit that its power will grow over the next few years, particularly in terms of what is to be devolved to member states and what is to remain with the Commission. Although the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs may shake his head, I believe that I am right in saying that the Commission will be deeply reluctant to give up the areas of decision making that are now within its province or within the Community's province. I cannot see the Commission allowing that kind of devolution of decision making.

Before I go any further, I must state that I am perfectly willing to refer to those central institutions and to use them as tactical conveniences. Indeed, I suggested that to the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), when he made a notable speech about the power of the European Court of Justice. In the near future, I hope to raise a case in the sheriff court in Greenock. I hope that the representatives of my constituent will be able to persuade the sheriff, by way of article 177, to refer the case to the European Court of Justice. That is an example of the power that that court possesses at the moment. That power must grow with the ratification of the treaty—if it is resuscitated by the Danes.

I will leave my analysis of the role of the European Court of Justice to our debate on amendments that we will presumably reach later this week, when I hope to catch your eye, Dame Janet. However, that court will play an important role in respect of article 3b. No matter how vigorously and determinedly this Government or successive Governments apply article 3b, I do not believe that article 3b will arrest the alarming process of centralisation that we are witnessing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has already quoted from the Select Committee on European Legislation, the members of which stated:

"Unhappily a sharp division of opinion has now opened up between lawyers and others. Lawyers, whether they are individually pro-Community or anti-Community, are showing a quite unusual degree of unity in categorising subsidiarity as a principle of policy which is far too imprecise to have any clear legal effect."

If that is the case, the only arbiters will be the 13 judges who comprise that august body—the European Court of Justice. The arbiter will not be a Scottish court, the Court of Session in Edinburgh or a court south of the border. Having to determine such questions will give the European Court of Justice an increasingly politicised role in decision making within the Community. I am sure that that gives those judges no satisfaction whatsoever.

I am not a lawyer, and there are lawyers present in the Committee who may challenge what I am saying. However, as a layman, I must state that I genuinely believe that that supreme court will take those decisions and have sanctions to levy against recalcitrant member states. In terms of subsidiarity—this might be an advantageous implementation of subsidiarity—the treaty elsewhere

allows individuals who believe that their nation state is not protecting them in terms of European legislation, to go to a national court and bring their Government to that national court. No doubt that must cause Governments nightmares.

A careful reading of the treaty and of the powers of the European Court of Justice shows that that kind of implementation of subsidiarity may arise. If an individual citizen believes that he or she is not being protected by the Government, state or Department of State, he or she can take that Government or Department of State to a national court. I welcome that degree of subsidiarity, although it has not been mentioned so far in our discussions.

I believe that subsidiarity is potentially justiciable, because it is in the treaty and judges will have to take decisions. The elected representatives in the 16 länder in Germany may feel fairly relaxed about the treaty in general and about article 3b in particular because they have fairly powerful powers in relation to the Government in Bonn. That sense of ease may be shared by elected representatives in the regional assemblies in Spain.

However, I cannot believe that the members of the Commission are relaxed about the prospect of the devolution of decision making to member states or regional governments. I cannot see how the concept of subsidiarity allows some areas of decision making to be taken away from the Community. Any such attempts would be vigorously rejected and opposed by the Commission.

I believe that the Commissioners genuinely believe that the Community is best placed to attain Community objectives. They are international civil servants in every sense of the words. I believe that they do not have a great deal of sympathy for the devolution of decision making to member states and regional governments.

I do not want to strain your patience, Dame Janet. I said that my speech would be fairly brief, but I am anxious to voice some of my concerns in my first speech in this debate. I am delighted that the Foreign Secretary is here and paying attention to me, although I am sure that he does not agree with me.

In Scotland, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the so-called United Kingdom, given its highly centralised structure. Many times, I have been asked whether the rather strange idea of subsidiarity will, when put into effect, take us along the path to a Scottish Parliament or even a fairer share of decision making over people's lives. I have said plainly and bluntly that my answer must be, "No, under a Conservative Government." I see that the Foreign Secretary does not disagree with me.

Tomorrow, the Secretary of State will offer my constituents—a growing number of all ages, but especially the young, are deeply dissatisfied with the present structure of the United Kingdom—a pathetically small concession towards the devolution of political power. It will not do. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) said at the weekend that this was a fatal mistake—it was making concessions to the secessionist movement in Scotland.

Subsidiarity will not even satisfy those who seek a genuine devolution of power to Scotland. The application of subsidiarity——

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before the hon. Gentleman continues, I should warn him that he is straying rather far from the substance of this debate. We cannot look at differing powers within the United Kingdom: we must look at subsidiarity in the European Community context.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful for that extremely courteous admonition. I was explaining that some people find it difficult to understand what it is in the treaty. They have asked me whether the implementation of article 3b will lead to a devolution of political decision making within the United Kingdom, and I have said no. At a meeting of the Select Committee on European Legislation, the Foreign Secretary said that the application of the document on subsidiarity is, to some extent, related to the devolution of decision making from Brussels to London and there it stays.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right, and I shall give him chapter and verse on that. It was discussed at the Birmingham summit last year and decided that the arrangements within each member state were for that member state. We can argue about the merits of the hon. Gentleman's proposals for Scotland or those of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland. However, the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) is correct in saying that it is not a matter for the Maastricht treaty or the Community.

Dr. Godman: In the absence of a referendum and a campaign, which would allow these questions to be debated at public meetings and be met, we must examine the interpretation of those questions in a debate such as this one. There is a genuine demand, supported by the overwhelming majority of Scots, for the reconstitution of the United Kingdom.

When my constituents have asked what the application of article 3b relating to subsidiarity can do in that regard, I have said that it can do nothing at all. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs is absolutely right. This political doctrine is overwhelmingly concerned with the distribution of power between Brussels and the capitals of the 12 member nations. I do not want to run foul of you again, Dame Janet. All I am saying is that that is totally unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of people of Scotland. They want much more.

We are extremely fortunate that the secessionist movement in Scotland is, thankfully, peaceable—and long may it remain so. However, there are genuine demands, concerns and anxieties about the governance of Scotland which are not met by the treaty. Over the next 10 to 15 years, we shall see a federalist United Kingdom. This place will be an English Parliament, and Scotland, thankfully, will have a Scottish Parliament.

8.45 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): We have enjoyed an extremely able speech from the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) in which he said that subsidiarity is somehow not applied in the United Kingdom. It is interesting to see how subsidiarity is applied in the United Kingdom in that it is hon. Members in this House who decide what matters are decided nationally and what matters are delegated to a lower level. Today, we are discussing the ability to make such decisions. That ability will be handed partly or totally

to the Community. I also wish to refer to the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and I shall come back to that later.

On Second Reading on 20 May, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister asserted that, for the Community, the Maastricht treaty marked

"the point at which, for the first time, we have begun to reverse that centralising trend"

by securing

"a legally binding text on subsidiarity".—[*Official Report*, 20 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 265-66.]

He then claimed that, if the Commission pursued an act which we considered did not comply with subsidiarity, we could take the issue to the European Court of Justice for adjudication. In his September speech on the presidency, he reiterated that Maastricht was "a turning point" in which

"the very centralising tendency that many are so worried about was addressed and correct".

Ministers frequently refer to subsidiarity when they make such claims. Indeed, subsidiarity was cited in exactly that way during the debate on the social chapter to demonstrate how the United Kingdom can expect to protect itself from over-intrusive legislation.

I wish to turn my attention to such claims and test their validity, because it is evident that subsidiarity has been oversold in an effort to gain support for the treaty. The first question must be whether subsidiarity represents a turning point—whether it will influence the way in which the Community works. What exactly does it change? That is where Ministers have always had a difficulty.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister began to qualify the effectiveness of article 3b as soon as it was challenged. When he was pressed at Question Time on 16 June, he responded:

"We should speedily qualify its practical applications. In the next few weeks that will most certainly be one of our priorities of our presidency"—[*Official Report*, 16 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. 773.]

When Parliament was recalled on 24 September 1992, he enlarged on that theme:

"So we need a definition—a settled order—of what is for national action and what is for Community action. We need clear criteria by which Community proposals will be judged."—[*Official Report*, 24 September 1992; Vol. 212, c. 8.]

By implication, article 3b and the Maastricht treaty on their own do not provide clear criteria.

The Edinburgh declaration on subsidiarity is meant to be this clarification and is the clearest indication that we have of what article 3b is intended to mean in legal terms. The legal meaning is the only meaning which has any relevance. I heard with great interest the comments about the levels of hierarchy which were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne. It is not hon. Members in the House who will decide which activities are dealt with by which hierarchy, but the Community's institutions.

Article 3b contains little or no reassurance that subsidiarity is a sign of a new direction. The declaration begins by restating article 3b in terms of three main elements which cover the three paragraphs of article 3b. The declaration says that these reflect

"three distinct legal concepts which have historical antecedents in the existing Community Treaties or in the case law of the Court of Justice".

Those concepts are spelt out. The first is:

"The principle that the Community can only act where given the power to do so—implying that national powers are the rule and the Community's the exception—has always been a basic feature of the Community legal order, (the principle of attribution of powers)."

That strongly suggests that subsidiarity is nothing new.

One of the standard legal text books of Community law is Lasok and Bridge. It explains the principle of attribution of powers. It says that the powers exercised by the Commuity originate from the member states but comprise a "common domain" which has been

"sublimated to that of the Community."

The key sentence is:

"This domain, originally delimited in the founding Treaties, tends to expand through the combined effect of the preamble of the EEC Treaty which lists in general terms the political, economic and social objectives of the treaty."

So—this is my first point—the starting point of article 3b, as defined by the Edinburgh declaration, is not about reversing the trend of Community competence. It is a stark restatement of it.

Mr. Butterfill: Can my hon. Friend explain why, if subsidiarity has no new effect, the moment that we reached an agreement in Edinburgh on subsidiarity, the Commission withdrew several of its draft directives—even before subsidiarity passed into Community law? It also said that it was actively reconsidering a raft of other directives and would decide whether they could be implemented in the light of the decision taken at Edinburgh. It went on to say that subsidiarity would affect the whole way in which it approached its work as a Commission in future. It has spelt that out in some considerable detail since.

Mr. Jenkin: In the words of Mandy Rice-Davies, "They would say that, wouldn't they?" The Commission is a political institution which is anxious, like any other Community institution, to see that the Maastricht treaty is ratified. Therefore, it is doing all that it can to avoid rocking the boat in the member states while the treaty goes through. I do not believe that its current behaviour can be taken as a guide to its future behaviour once that process is completed.

I was about to explain the principle of the attribution of powers which was restated in the Edinburgh declaration about subsidiarity. Lasok and Bridge continue their explanation of the principle of the attribution of powers thus:

"Once delegated the power cannot be withdrawn . . . This is the doctrine of the 'occupied field' . . . Thus, the Community determines the extent of the legal integration and does not permit the member states to be out of step."

So the Edinburgh declaration on subsidiarity contains no suggestion that subsidiarity is intended to be about reversing the centralising trend of the Community. As we read on through the declaration, no doubt is left how the second and third of the distinct legal concepts are to be interpreted and enforced. We can be under absolutely no illusion that the institutions of the Community will decide whether an action can be better attained at the level of the Community than at the level of the member states. The institutions of the Community will decide the means to be employed to achieve the objective pursued.

The declaration goes on to describe how subsidiarity should respect the established basic principles; that subsidiarity

"cannot call into question the powers conferred on the European Community by the Treaty as interpreted by the Court . . . The application of the principle shall respect the general provisions of the Maastricht Treaty including the maintaining in full of the acquis communautaire."

Therefore, while subsidiarity may well encourage the Community institutions to ask themselves whether a

[Mr. Jenkin]

Community action is necessary, it will not provide member states with any additional protection from intrusive measures based upon the expanded objectives set out in article 2 or the enlarged areas of activity in article 3.

Moreover, not only is nothing reversed but, in the maintenance of the acquis communautaire, here as elsewhere in the treaty, all the Community's gains in competence are consolidated. The declaration continues: "it shall not affect the primacy of community law."

That seems finally to confirm that subsidiarity can only ever be an instrument by which the Community institutions themselves decide the extent of their own authority. It does not matter what we want it to mean as a concept: we shall not be in a position to decide. The Community will decide the levels of hierarchy to which my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne referred.

Later, the declaration reaffirms the obligation to comply with article 5 and abstain from any action which could jeopardise the attainment of the objectives of the treaty. So it would be pointless for a member state to invoke subsidiarity if the court thought that a member state was trying to frustrate a treaty objective. That leads to my second point.

Subsidiarity could represent an additional centralising threat. It empowers the Community to take action where, by reason of the scale of the effects of the proposed action, the action is better achieved by the Community. But the final paragraph of article 3b creates a new centralising force. It says:

"Any action by the Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of this Treaty."

That may sound harmless or even helpful to decentralisers but although it is phrased in the negative, it carries a positive corollary.

Moreover, the reference to the "objectives of this treaty" is significant. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State was at pains to point out during the debate on the social chapter that articles 2, 3 and 5 were non vires conferring. However, Lasok and Bridge confirm that it is a general principle of Community law that the objectives become doctrines to govern actions by the institutions. As well as indicating policy to legislators, articles 2, 3 and 5 are, to the court, pointers to interpretation and a formal source to complement inadequately expressed intentions to the makers of the treaty. The reference to the objectives of the treaty in article 3b therefore reinforces those centralising indications.

The Edinburgh declaration explains:

"Subsidiarity is a dynamic concept and should be applied in the light of the objectives set out in the Treaty. It allows Community action to be expanded where circumstances so require."

Far from being a purely decentralising concept, therefore, it is explicitly stated there that subsidiarity can be used to widen Community powers; it therefore strengthens the centralising tendency of the Community.

In any case, if it was to achieve the aim of limiting Community intrusion into the affairs of member states, the definition of subsidiarity in article 3b is fundamentally flawed because it does not demand any concrete Community interest to be at stake as a justification for taking action. Instead, it merely requires that the action be necessary in furtherance of an "objective"—for example, a social objective which can be entirely internal to the member states.

The Edinburgh guidelines exacerbate that weaknss of definition, by explicitly recognising that actions may be taken by the Community even when no transnational aspect is involved, in order to further treaty objectives, such as

"economic and social cohesion and solidarity among the Member States"—

to quote from the new article 2. Those new objectives will justify more extensive Community action in the social sphere and, because article 3b on subsidiarity defers to those objectives, it encourages rather than checks that tendency.

When President Mitterrand accuses the United Kingdom of "lack of solidarity" over "le dumping social" he is consciously alluding to an objective of the treaty that will inform Community institutions in their actions.

May I remind the Committee of the excellent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith), during the debate on the social chapter, in which he argued that, far from securing the supremacy of Parliament in social affairs, the Maastricht treaty would further erode Parliament's ability to decide such matters independently of the Community, notwithstanding our so-called opt-out from the social chapter.

9 pm

In response, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office conceded the worth of those arguments and accepted that such issues would be entirely dependent on the ruling of the European Court of Justice. He accepted that the court has

"traditionally been a centralising institution".

As a counterweight, he offered his vision of a changed European Court of Justice which, as we pursue our policies in the Community, would no longer be centralising. He claimed:

"it is not fair to assume that the court will necessarily and at all times make centralising judgments . . . I see clear signs of a change of emphasis, and I believe that that trend will be reinforced by the Maastricht Treaty."

He later explained:

"Through the courts and by introducing article 3b, we must seek to influence the way in which the Community works, not to despair about it."—[*Official Report*, 27 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. 1058-60.]

However, when a majority in the Community are already to be carrying out action in the social field, if the Commission or another member state should seek to bring the United Kingdom into the purview of such actions, subsidiarity will be no defence. On the contrary, it strengthens the treaty basis for doing so.

In practice, however, the court is only a backdrop against which the Commission will make its proposals to the Council of Ministers. That body, when it enacts legislation, will effectively decide how to implement subsidiarity. Again, Edinburgh confirms that subsidiarity shall apply

"only to the extent that the Treaty gives to the institution concerned the choice whether to act".

As we have so often found to our cost, where the Council has a will and a qualified majority, it will find a way. In the normal course of events, it will be inconceivable for a member state to invoke subsidiarity to stop a directive in the European Court, once a qualified majority had given its support to the measure. That flies in the face of earlier ministerial assertions. Once the Council has decided, there simply will be no case for a member state to make.

When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary wrote, in a letter to *The Sunday Times* on 22 November that subsidiarity is

"an important legally binding constraint on Community action",

he should have explained that the only constraint that it provides is that which the Council is prepared to impose on itself. For example, there is no protection from the working time directive through subsidiarity. Therein lies the real weakness of the United Kingdom opt-out from the social chapter.

The protocol on social policy provides that the 11 should enact their social chapter policies through the Council of Ministers. If the 11 are voting to impose their social costs upon themselves, subsidiarity will not prevent them from outvoting the 12th to ensure that we bear the same burden. If they have satisfied themselves that the proposed action passes the subsidiarity test, there is little reason to allow us to be an exception.

Every time that Ministers have tangled with the concept of subsidiarity they have put themselves deeper in the mire.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): My hon. Friend has obviously put a lot of thought into the interesting speech that he is delivering. If I understood him aright he has made the most extraordinary suggestion—that in practice the European Court of Justice would set aside the text of our protocol providing for an opt-out from the social chapter, to enforce on us the terms of a chapter from which we have explicitly been excluded by the text of the treaty as it stands. Is that what my hon. Friend is suggesting? Does he really believe that professional lawyers and judges of the European Court of Justice—men of integrity and intelligence—would for one moment impugn their profession by subverting the established text of the treaty in that way?

Mr. Jenkin: The important point that my hon. Friend makes—or, rather, misses—is that there are plenty of other treaty bases upon which the provisions of the social chapter can be applied. Articles 2, 3, and 5 provide the basic context for Community objectives and activities. We see there recognition of such important objectives as economic and social cohesion and solidarity among member states. So it is simply a question of going to one of the majority-voting provisions, such as article 118a, and asking the court to stretch the meaning, as has happened in other areas of Community law.

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): Another point in support of this case is that the protocol is clearly distanced from the main body of the text in one area: it says nothing that affects essentially the means by which people will import the social provisions. Actual words to that effect are not there, but that is what is meant. That cannot be a basis for saying that articles 2, 3 and 5 may not be used.

Mr. Jenkin: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The social protocol says:

"without prejudice to the provisions of this Treaty, particularly those relating to social policy which constitute an integral part of the 'acquis communautaire'".

We are not opting out of any social provisions already contained in the Single European Act or the treaty of Rome. Indeed, we are buying into additional social provisions by virtue of the expanded objectives set out in article 2 and the expanded areas of activity set out in article 3.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The hon. Gentleman has indeed raised a very important point. However, the matter could be resolved immediately. The Foreign Secretary, who negotiated the treaty, is on the Government Front Bench. Why does not the hon. Gentleman challenge his right hon. Friend to say whether he is right or wrong? The hon. Gentleman is saying that the protocol negotiated by the Government for the social chapter opt-out has no real effect or validity. In other words, the Government simply wanted a blanket to cover their nakedness following the negotiations.

Surely the hon. Gentleman will want to press his right hon. Friend for an immediate answer. Thus we could resolve the confusion that seems to have crept into the debate. I do not know whether the Foreign Secretary is going to move. Perhaps he wants to wait for the return of the Attorney-General.

Mr. Jenkin: I was getting on extremely well with my speech until the hon. Gentleman invited the great man himself to intervene. If my right hon. Friend wants to come in at this stage I shall very happily give way.

Mr. Hurd: I am loth to yield to the mischief-making of the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers). However, as he is indeed making mischief, we might as well indulge in it. On the specific point on which he has issued his challenge, I do not think that there is any great disagreement. Of course we have had problems with the legal reach of the existing treaties in the social sphere. The working time directive is one example. However, the fact that there are problems with the existing arrangements does not mean that one should multiply—double, triple, quadruple—those problems by adopting a treaty base that would turn what is now an exception into an everyday affair. It simply does not make any sense to do that, and that is the purpose of the opt-out.

My hon. Friend is making a fascinating and able speech. It is fascinating because it is outside the debate that has been taking place inside the Community for the past two years.

Mr. Spearing: So what?

Mr. Hurd: The point is that it is not so long ago that what my hon. Friend is challenging, objecting to and saying is inevitable was orthodox. People believed in the centralising tendency. Every advance made towards Community jurisdiction was judged a good thing in itself. That has changed. I accept that the change is not perfect and that there are people around who hold to the old view. However, it is a little out of date for my hon. Friend to look from outside the institutions of the Community and say that things cannot be challenged or changed by member states. Of course it is only member states who give power to the Community, as my hon. Friend acknowledged when he explained the first sentence of article 3b.

What is happening now, however—I ask my hon. Friend to take my word for it—is that the different institutions are changing. That is reflected in article 3b, the Edinburgh declaration, the activities of the Commission and the sharp reduction in the number of legislative proposals coming forward. That is political fact before it is a legal obligation.

We have the option to say that such changes are not any good, to be cynical and to say, "They would say that,

[Mr. Hurd]

wouldn't they?" We have the option to reject the changes, but that would be a mistake, because our arguments are beginning to bear fruit, and here they are.

Mr. Jenkin: I naturally take seriously everything that my right hon. Friend says. However, I recently visited the institutions of the Community, notably the Parliament and the Commission. I did not find anyone who supports our Government's view of the treaty and the direction of the Community. On the contrary, every other Government regards Maastricht as merely an interim step on the way to a federal Europe. My right hon. Friend may disagree, but where are all the people who support our view of the Community as one of nation states and our view that the treaty is reversing the centralising process? The only people I could find are those who are against the treaty, such as Mr. Philippe Séguin and the No Campaign of Denmark.

Mr. Rogers: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would like to press his right hon. Friend a little further. If I could be even more mischievous, I would suggest that the Foreign Secretary has not given his hon. Friend an answer to the simple question that was posed to him. Is the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) right to say that parts of existing treaties or of this treaty will overrule the protocol that the Government negotiated on the social chapter when certain specific situations come up? If that is the case, why are we having all the fuss about the social chapter? Surely the hon. Member for Colchester, North would want to press his right hon. Friend for an answer on that precise question.

Mr. Jenkin: I simply refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers that were given to my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford in an earlier debate. We were told that we must seek to influence the way in which the Community works through the courts and by the introduction of article 3. That was the reassurance we were given. We were told that we should not despair about it.

I do not despair, but I require more than the requirement not to despair to reassure me that we shall not be included, eventually, in the purview of all social legislation. What exactly does the opt-out from the social chapter protect us from? What measures envisaged by the social chapter does the treaty not give a base to in its main body? If I received an answer to that question I might be reassured.

Every time Ministers have tangled with the concept of subsidiarity they have got themselves deeper into the mire. Subsidiarity consolidates the existing legal order. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary did not seek to explain that somehow we are subverting the principle of the doctrine of the occupied field, the legal principle on which the Community is founded. Subsidiarity consolidates the existing legal order, increases the scope for expanding the Community's competence and provides little recourse for member states against Community actions.

In the Second Reading debate on 21 May, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary claimed:

"The treaty of Maastricht reinforces the position of national Parliaments".—[*Official Report*, 21 May 1992; Vol. 208, C. 517.]

However, Frank Vibert QC gave his opinion of subsidiarity, as defined in article 3b of the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. He said that the end result of Maastricht

"would be the eventual reduction of national parliaments to performing essentially agency roles for the central authorities."

9.15 pm

The Government regularly claim that the inclusion of subsidiarity was a great British success at Maastricht. However, in March 1991—some months before the union treaty was agreed at Maastricht—Jacques Delors, speaking at the Jacques Delor colloquium entitled "Subsidiarity—guiding principles for the future of EC policy and responsibility", defined the concept of subsidiarity as follows:

"Subsidiarity is not simply a *limit* to intervention by a higher authority vis-a-vis a person or a community in a position to act itself, it is an *obligation* for *this* authority to act vis-a-vis this person or this group to see that it is *given* the *means* to achieve its ends."

That version of subsidiarity reminds us of Article A, which invokes

"an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen."

It suggests that subsidiarity will be used to circumvent national parliaments and strengthen the direct relationship between Community institutions and the citizen.

Subsidiarity is to Delors the moral and legal basis for direct social intervention. Therefore, it was no surprise that we were able to persuade all his federalist allies to allow Britain to have subsidiarity as a face saver in the Maastricht treaty instead of "federal vocation". Subsidiarity is entirely consistent with a federal vocation for the Community. We were pushing at an open door. In summary, subsidiarity, far from confirming parliament as the supreme legislative authority in the land, will instead make it ever more subsidiary to the institutions in Brussels.

Subsidiarity is summarised in the excellent paper produced by the House of Commons Library. It explains how subsidiarity has been invoked

"as a guide to the means of limiting EC powers, just as federal states include a clause allocating and delimiting the powers of the state and its component parts. The US Constitution contains just such a clause in the Tenth Amendment . . . The German constitution, the basic law, has a similar clause in article 30".

Subsidiarity—along with the establishment of the union, the single currency, common foreign policy leading to a common defence, the citizenship, the single institutional framework, the Council, the Parliament, the judges and the court presiding over a supreme body of law—is yet another manifestation of the centralised European superstate in the making. History will laugh at those who advocated the treaty in the name of the sovereignty of Parliament, or who said that it would strengthen the role of national Parliaments and was a step towards a Community of nation states. We are already in a legal federation.

As Lasok and Bridge explain, the doctrine of the direct applicability and direct effect of Community law

"unmistakably points to a federal character because in a federal system federal law bears directly upon the citizens of the component states".

From this, subsidiarity not only provides no escape, but gives further impetus.

Finally, I remind the Committee of the negotiating mandate that the House of Commons gave to the

Government before the final Maastricht negotiations. The Government were sent off to work for an agreement, in the words of the resolution,

"which avoids a federal Europe."

It stretches the meaning of the English language to insist that that mandate was delivered.

I end with the words of Jacques Delors. Referring to subsidiarity at his colloquium the previous March, he said: "it only makes sense in a federal approach".

Mr. Dalyell: I should like to ask the Foreign Secretary, who is present, a question to do with relations between Brussels and local authorities, and in particular about money.

Our country's comparative economic decline in Europe was underscored on 24 February when the Commission in Brussels announced that parts of England and Scotland should, for the first time, be eligible for the maximum rate of EC development aid. Merseyside and the Highlands and Islands have joined regions such as Campagna in the south of Italy as deserving objective 1 funds from the EC's £15-billion-a-year cohesion budget.

Our former colleague Bruce Millan—I had dealings with him when he was Secretary of State for Scotland and for a quarter of a century before that; we know that he is an extremely accurate man, not to mention an exceedingly careful accountant—is the Commissioner for regional funding. Mr. Millan has challenged the Treasury to spend about £1 billion more on the poorest regions in industrial decline, or Britain and the British Government will forfeit matching funds from Brussels.

I heard Bruce Millan say that on the radio and I tried to contact him over the weekend. I failed to contact him, but I have no doubt that the report is accurate. Britain is certainly catching up in the poverty stakes, according to the regional spending department of the Community.

After furious wrangling between civil servants of various nationalities, it seems that it was agreed that the English and Scottish regions were sufficiently economically disadvantaged. On Merseyside, the 1,400,000 inhabitants have incomes 78·9 per cent. of the EC average; the 277,000 people of the Highlands and Islands have incomes 78·7 per cent. of that average.

To be fair to Bruce Millan, I should add that he announced that the Abruzzi region of Italy, a long-standing recipient of full EC funding, was to be taken off the list because of its increasing prosperity. The Secretary of State for the Environment pushed for south Yorkshire, rural Wales and Devon and Cornwall to be added to the list, but was turned down by the Commission.

I want to ask whoever is to wind up about the warning that Bruce Millan gave the Government—that the Government risked forfeiting at least part of the £1 billion spent every year on Britain's industrially stricken regions with objective 2 status unless the Government backed down in the row over how the cash is spent.

Brussels accused London of flouting the EC regional aid rules by taking the cash into the Treasury and not immediately given it to local authorities to spend on designated projects. Tonight I look for some sort of refutation of Mr. Millan's argument, or acceptance that it is factually correct.

Local authorities in depressed areas in England and Wales strongly back the Commission in its row with the United Kingdom Government over the allocation of EC aid. I understand from the Minister responsible for industry in Scotland that he does not know about the troubles that have arisen; but I also know that Strathclyde and Lothian have had good relations with the EC and are thus rather disturbed that there should be any potential source of friction.

But anger and frustration are increasing in town halls because of the risk that up to £1 billion of EC aid could be lost to projects in our country's worst-hit regions because of a long-running conflict over the distribution of cash. At the heart of the dispute is whether the various EC funds are additional to the regional spending by member states or whether Governments, and especially the British Government, are using them to reduce the cost of capital programmes by curbing local authority spending. That is the root of the argument.

The EC Commissioner, Bruce Millan, is becoming increasingly convinced, following protests from local authorities, that the legal conditions for the distribution of aid are still not being met by the London Government and that EC money should co-finance projects that would not otherwise go ahead and which would have a genuine additional impact in the regions concerned. It is the classic and long-running saga of additionality.

In considering subsidiarity how does the Foreign Secretary hope to resolve the urgent problem of additionality? The director of economic development, Richard Davies, said:

"We have had the silly situation where we have had to cram three-year projects into a few weeks because it has taken so long for the funding to come through."

Davis added bitterly:

"The bottom line is that the Treasury has been taking away the money from local authorities."

I believe that that is true because I have spoken to the local authorities and, more important than my believing it, they believe it. I ask the Foreign Secretary: is it true that money to the tune of about £1 billion which would otherwise have come to the most hard-pressed local authorities in this country is not getting through? Well, I see that the right hon. Gentleman is not replying at this moment.

Barbara Edwards, the deputy director of the project, said:

"Everywhere else in Europe they're powering ahead—the government accepts that they have to pay up. But here nothing happened for over a year because the funds were blocked."

Barbara Edwards believes that the continuing rows could also delay the stage of any project due to start next year.

Apparently a similar saga of confusion unfolds in the midlands, where plans to develop a railway line backed by a 1992 EC grant were held up through lack of funds to match potential EC grants. Enough money has been put together to start the line running north from Nottingham, but not enough has been raised to take it to Mansfield and Worksop. Although the line is supported by the EC, the authorities involved are unable to match the potential EC grants.

I am glad that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), who is responsible for industry in Scotland, has entered the Chamber. He will be aware of the special report on investing in Scotland, in which Eric Baird introduces a three-page analysis of current trends. Mr. Baird says that we are in good shape to embrace a new beginning but expresses concern about the transfer package made possible by support from the Scottish Office, the Glasgow

[Mr. Dalyell]

development agency and Strathclyde regional council's business development arm. Is it within the EC rules and is there any basis for the outcry that we are not getting funds that would otherwise come to us?

There is criticism that we are simply funding foreign ownership of new industry and providing an entry to European markets. That is true, but such a premise ignores the benefits not only in direct employment but to many smaller businesses.

Bruce Millan was closely questioned in "The World Tonight" radio programme and said that he was very sorry that he could not give a substantial amount of money to the most needy regions of our country. He explained that if there was much more delay and if he still believed that Britain was not accepting the EC rules, Britain had to be clear that the money will go to other Community countries and to their deserving regions.

The purpose of my intervention is to ask three direct questions of the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland or of the Foreign Secretary. First, are Bruce Millan's remarks true? Secondly, has Mr. Millan in any way misunderstood the position? Thirdly, if by any chance Mr. Millan has not misunderstood the position—I suspect that he has not—what will the Government do to enable the most hard-up, needy regions of our country to benefit from European funds which are there for the asking but, one can only assume, for the pig-headedness of the Treasury in not providing matching funds?

9.30 pm

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): This debate illustrates the wholly cynical approach that the Labour party has taken to all the Maastricht debates. The hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) said that, although the Opposition had tabled an amendment that sought to delete the principle of subsidiarity from the treaty, he was nevertheless totally in favour of that principle. That shows the magnitude of the Labour party's "Alice in Wonderland" approach to all our debates on the Maastricht treaty, and the pure cynicism with which it pursues its entirely political objectives, which have nothing to do with treaty or with this country's well-being.

The Labour party knows very well that prolonging the debate is damaging Britain's commercial interests, exports, and prospects of inward investment, yet by their amendment the Opposition make it clear that their prime objective is to delay the treaty's implementation and to give a minority of my right hon. and hon. Friends—whose position I entirely respect, because most of them have opposed the European Community from the outset—an opportunity to embarrass the Government. That is Labour's position today, and it is entirely disreputable.

Mr. Jenkin: What does that have to do with subsidiarity?

Mr. Butterfill: The subject of this debate is subsidiarity, and it is taking place not because subsidiarity is contentious across the Floor of the Committee but because Labour wants to delay the treaty's progress.

Mr. George Robertson: It gets a bit wearisome at times continually to have to tell Conservative Members that the only way that the Committee can debate an important issue such as subsidiarity—the Foreign Secretary's presence is testimony to its importance—is by tabling an amendment to delete subsidiarity from the treaty. That is not meant as a ploy to delay ratification of the treaty but is the only device available under parliamentary proceedures to allow debate. When will Conservative Back Benchers learn that fact of life?

Mr. Butterfill: The hon. Gentleman's protestations would be rather more convincing if there had not already been many debates on the principle of subsidiarity. There was no need for tonight's debate, because, as the hon. Gentleman himself clearly said, Labour supports that principle. It is clear that tonight's debate is for the Labour party's political convenience, and has nothing to do with the treaty.

Mr. Wilkinson: Does not my hon. Friend acknowledge that a number of the amendments in the group under discussion include several in the names of Conservative Members, for good and serious reasons? They believe that the issue merits serious political consideration and debate. My hon. Friend complains that certain hon. Members are unnecessarily extending the debate. Will he bear in mind the fact that many debates were peremptorily curtailed by the Government by means of closure motions, and that they have the wherewithal readily at their disposal to end the problem of extensive debate, by calling a referendum and letting our people decide?

Mr. Butterfill: As my hon. Friend knows—because I said it earlier, and I am sure that he was listening carefully—I do not complain about what has been said by my hon. Friends who are opposed to European Community membership——

Mr. Wilkinson: Or to the treaty?

Mr. Butterfill: Indeed, they may be opposed only to the treaty. I do not complain about that; I am complaining about the sheer cynicism betrayed by the Labour party this evening.

Let me now turn to the meaning of subsidiarity. A number of attempts have been made to define the concept——

Mr. Marlow: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Butterfill: I should like to develop my argument a little; then I may give way. We have heard a number of Conservative Members expressing opinions similar to those of my hon. Friend, at great length; I think that mine is the first speech to give some support to what the Government are doing, and I should be grateful if I could continue for a while.

We have heard what subsidiarity is. Let me deal with what it is not. Certainly, it is not what the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy)—speaking for the Liberal Democrats—suggested it might be. He suggested that, to create subsidiarity, we should—among other things—incorporate in English law the European convention on human rights. Nothing would be less designed to uphold the principle of subsidiarity: We would take away from the House the right to decide the correct way to proceed on human rights, on behalf of our constituents, and give it to an unelected group of three judges.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Butterfill: I shall do so when I have finished the point that I am making. Let us see whether the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene when he has heard me out.

If we incorporated the European convention in our law, we should give that right to three judges in Strasbourg who are unelected and not accountable to anyone. The House of Commons has decided to ratify the convention, and Parliament has never failed to uphold a decision by the European Court of Human Rights; but we reserve the right to take such action in the future, if it is in the interests of the nation. Opposition Members wish to take away the powers of the House, and to give them to an unelected court in Strasbourg by enacting in English law the whole panoply of the European convention. That is unnecessary, and would be an abuse of the House.

Mr. Wallace: Perhaps it is as well that I waited before intervening. The hon. Gentleman has made clear his total lack of comprehension of the European convention on human rights. What he describes as an abuse is what happens now: any British citizen who wishes to pursue his case under the convention, to which we are a signatory, must go to the judges in Europe. We want to allow British citizens to vindicate their rights in a Scottish, English or Welsh court.

When the hon. Gentleman said that the House might not uphold a decision by the European Court, did he mean that the House would willingly breach its international obligations? Is that his party's policy?

Mr. Butterfill: I am afraid that it is the hon. Gentleman who is displaying his ignorance. Under the present system, the European Court of Human Rights will not even hear a case unless it has been taken to the highest authority in this country. Our courts must judge first; only if a citizen fails to obtain what he considers to be justice can he go to the European Court of Human Rights, which—because we are a signatory to the treaty—may then order us to comply. And, because we are a signatory, we have never yet failed to comply.

The distinction that I am making is this. Under the present system, although we comply, we reserve our sovereignty; under the hon. Gentleman's system, we would give it away. The hon. Gentleman misses my point: the action that he proposes would negate subsidiarity rather than creating it. I challenge his suggestion—or that of his hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye—that we would create subsidiarity by adopting the approach they suggest.

Mr. Marlow: My hon. Friend says that it is vital that we hurry up, reject the amendment and pass the Bill, or investment will evaporate or melt like snow in mid-summer. What will happen to the single market if we do not pass the treaty?

Mr. Butterfill: My hon. Friend has a long and respected position of not believing that Britain's best economic interests will be served by pursuing the Maastricht treaty and the union that is involved in ratifying it. I disagree with him. Most City opinion, every industrialist in my constituency and almost every industrialist throughout the country would disagree with him. He is entitled to his opinion, which he has expressed many times. I disagree with him, as so do most hon. Members, and most people in the country.

The Labour party has cynically used the debate on subsidiarity to promote devolution and giving power to the regions. It wanted the debate so that it could promote its views on the subject. It believes in uniform system of devolution to the regions, that we should all have länder like Germany and that it would be a wonderful panacea. It believes that that is subsidiarity. Again, it has got it wrong. Subsidiarity is about nation states taking decisions when it is appropriate for them to do so. It has nothing to do with imposing länder on Britain or giving independence to Scotland.

Scotland is part of a Union. Some would say that it is over-represented in this place, but a disproportionate amount of state money is spent on it.

Mr. Bill Walker: When Scotland and England united to form this United Kingdom unitary Parliament in 1707, we knew exactly what union meant. When the Government and others signed the Single European Act in 1986, I was given assurances in this Chamber that we were not signing up for the form of Union that I understood. Tonight, we have been told that we are creating a legal union, of which we shall become members. Is that not a sleight of hand?

Mr. Butterfill: No. I would not wish to get involved in a debate on the intricacies of Scottish politics. Suffice it to say that the Scots are well represented in the House and we have the Union. The treaty does not propose to divide Britain into länder, and nor would I wish to do so. Interestingly, the party that stood for the Union and promoted it in Scotland was the only one to increase its share of the vote in Scotland.

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) made an interesting and well thought out speech, but I do not agree with him about subsidiarity. Subsidiarity is not something to paper over the cracks between the demands of our national interest and those of the European interest. On the contrary, it defines what is the province of one and what is the province of the other. The definition that the Commission has put on subsidiarity——

Mr. Jenkin: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Butterfill: No. I have given way to colleagues who represent my hon. Friend's point of view, and I should like to develop my argument.

On subsidiarity, there is an acceptance that the rules of the Community, which need to be made for its proper maintenance, should not go further than is needed for Community purposes. Many of us believed that many of the Commission's previous proposals went a good deal further than was necessary for the Community purpose which we had all agreed. Therefore, the first definition of subsidiarity is that the purpose should not be exceeded.

The second definition is that action need not be—and should not be—taken at Community level if it can be taken more efficiently by the member state alone. Only if the member state cannot fulfil the purpose through its own legislation is there a need to introduce a Community rule.

9.45 pm

It is clear that much less needs to be done by regulation through the Commission, and far more by directives. Many people believe that Community directives are contrary to national legislation, but that is not so. They allow for the state to decide precisely how the Community's objectives should be put into national law.

That difference of principle is very important. The principle of subsidiarity is an extremely important part of the treaty. It protects the interests of member states.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) made a powerful speech, and I agreed with a great deal of what he said. However, I disagreed with the main thrust of his speech. He seemed to disagree with the Community's and the treaty's objectives. He said that subsidiarity would not protect us from those objectives. Of course, if he disagrees with the treaty's objectives, he is right not to vote for it. However, if he merely objects to something that will not protect us from those objectives, he is adopting an irrational position.

Mr. Jenkin: I remind my hon. Friend that the treaty states that the Community shall have as its task the establishment of a common market and an economic and monetary union, and the implementation of common policies and activities referred to in articles 3 and 3a, including a common currency, a common foreign policy and other highly important emblems of statehood. The idea that we can use subsidiarity to protect our own statehood is the fallacy of the Government's argument.

Mr. Butterfill: I understand that, if my hon. Friend objects to the treaty's objectives, he will naturally not want to support it. However, most hon. Members do not object to its objectives and, under those circumstances——

Dr. John Cunningham: Before the hon. Gentleman continues his waffling argument, he should apologise to his hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin). He and all his colleagues oppose the treaty's objectives on the social chapter, they are now opposing those on subsidiarity and they have just voted against its objectives for the Committee of the Regions. What more does he want them to object to?

Mr. Butterfill: The right hon. Gentleman knows that we object to the social chapter, which is why we had it removed from the treaty. His argument is complete nonsense. I was agreeing with my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North that some of the Community's institutions currently have a federal character. Any treaty that creates a union of different countries must create a federal character for that union. He may object to going further down the federal road—that is his decision. I accept that the treaty as drafted will create an additional federal character, but it is not an argument for objecting to the treaty itself.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): We have heard some thoughtful speeches in this debate. I am not sure that the speech by the hon. Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill) quite rose to the occasion. I found it interesting to listen to Conservative Members railing against the treaty, against Ministers and against Opposition Front-Bench Members on the ground that the legislation was likely to lead to the centralisation of power within the European Community. Those remarks came from supporters of a Government who have ruthlessly imposed centralised power on every part of the United Kingdom with no consent from several parts of the United Kingdom, especially Scotland and Wales.

I support the principles of the treaty and I look forward to voting for the Bill on Third Reading when, I hope, it will have been duly amended. I say that as one who represents a constituency in a country which has shared its sovereignty with its big brother since 1707, so I do not have the fears of some Conservative Members about sharing sovereignty.

I was intrigued by the point made by the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) about the prospect of the European Court of Justice imposing the social chapter on Britain despite the fact that it was not part of the treaty for us because we had an opt-out. That could be an even more bizarre prospect than the hon. Gentleman imagines. Not long from now, we could find that the House had voted to opt into the social chapter, but that, on the advice of lawyers, the British Government had been able to cling to the opt-out. Under the scenario painted by the hon. Member for Colchester, North, the European Court of Justice would be the only way in which to protect the right of the House to vote to opt into the social chapter. The hon. Gentleman should consider the logic of his position.

The term "subsidiarity" is singularly inelegant, but it is important. I believe in that concept passionately. I also believe that it should apply not only within the EC, but within the United Kingdom. Subsidiarity should not stop at Westminster or at Whitehall. The principle should apply within the United Kingdom as well as within the European Community.

That point is all the more important in view of the fact that the House has demonstrated that it cannot be trusted to protect the interests of the nations within the United Kingdom. Over the past 14 or 15 years, the Government have been allowed to ride roughshod over the interests of the people of Wales, of the people of Scotland and of the people of the regions of England, with the consent of the House.

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): I notice that the hon. Gentleman has assiduously avoided mentioning Northern Ireland, where the rights of the people and the will of the people have been more rigorously overridden than is the case in any other part of the United Kingdom. Perhaps he will keep that point in mind in future.

Mr. Home Robertson: That is why I did not cite the people of Northern Ireland. I am talking about Scotland, the country that I know best.

In the Prime Minister's statement to the House following the Council meeting in Birmingham, he told us that the Birmingham declaration recognised the importance of national identities and that it called for a greater role for national Parliaments in the work of the Community. He also found that principle in the agreement which came out of Edinburgh—Edinburgh, of all places for such an agreement to be made. Edinburgh is the capital of a nation which does not yet have a parliament, despite the fact that the people of Scotland have voted again, again and again to have their own Parliament. That was a heavy irony.

Mr. Wallace: Does the hon. Gentleman recall the speech that the Secretary of State for Scotland gave to the Tory Monday club at the most recent Conservative party conference? He said that, although Scotland had not had its own parliament for 286 years, we would be a centre of cultural and economic prosperity. Does the hon. Gentleman honestly believe that the same argument can apply to Europe and that if we had not had the Westminster Parliament for 280 years and had been governed from Brussels, we would have enjoyed the same cultural and economic prosperity?

Mr. Home Robertson: The conclusion that I am trying to reach in my speech is perhaps a reverse of the phrase, "Better the devil you know than the devil you don't". We have known this particular devil too long, and perhaps it is time that we had another to work with.

Following the Prime Minister's statement on the Birmingham summit, I wrote to the Prime Minister. He replied that the summit recognised

"that it is for each Member State to decide how its powers should be exercised domestically: . . . It is up to individual Member States to order their own constitutional affairs at a national and sub-national level."

I suppose that that means that Wales and Scotland are sub-nations. I do not recognise that term. I do not accept it and I do not believe that the people of Scotland would accept it. We must consider what a nation is and how a nation or a group of nations can impose accountability on Governments who are supposed to be serving them.

Conspicuously, the people of Scotland have not been able to secure that accountability from their Government in recent years. We should compare that situation with what applies in other large European countries with regions and historic nations within their borders. In that respect, I think of Germany and Spain. We must consider the democratic accountability in German länder such as Bavaria and Spanish provinces such as Catalonia. We must consider their direct input into European institutions. However, Scotland and Wales will be denied such an input.

Any deal which denies Scotland and Wales the rights available to the people of Bavaria and Catalonia is not tolerable. The Government are simply offering stocktaking—something that I understand we shall hear more about tomorrow. The Tories received yet another fright in Scotland last year in the general election. As a result, the Prime Minister said that he would have to take stock of the constitutional situation there.

That stockpot has been boiling away on the back burner for the past 12 months and I believe that we shall see some very dry bones tomorrow afternoon when the Prime Minister makes his announcement. There will be bits and pieces of Committees and more administrative and non-accountable devolution to officials in a Scottish Office which is accountable to only 11 of Scotland's 72 elected Members of Parliament.

The Prime Minister declared that the principle of subsidiarity is a vital and important democratic principle that he has inserted in the European process. If subsidiarity is good for Europe, it must also be right for the United Kingdom. The House has dismally failed to protect the rights and liberties of our people and it deserves to be eclipsed by more democratic and effective institutions in Strasbourg, Edinburgh or Cardiff.

The subsidiarity that the Government are offering the Committee in the Bill and the treaty is a charade and a sham. If it were real, we would support it wholeheartedly. I hope to goodness that Ministers will be able to persuade us that they believe in the principle and that they will apply it not only to Europe, but to the historic nations of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Bill Walker: I wish to follow the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) in what was a trip down a rather odd lane. He and I may take different views about what subsidiarity means, but I should make it clear to him that there is no doubt that the people of Scotland know what this Parliament represents for them and their interests. They understand that. They know the position. There is no doubt about what happens when they elect hon. Members to this place, whether those hon. Members come from any party, no party or whatever. At least hon. Members represent the interests of Scottish people in this place. We do not know what subsidiarity will mean in effect for Members from Scotland if and when the legal definition is properly and clearly articulated.

Dr. Godman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that application of the principle of subsidiarity will in no way arrest the growing centralisation of decision making within the European Community?

Mr. Walker: I could not agree more wholeheartedly with the hon. Gentleman.

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress; to sit again tomorrow.

10 pm

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to refer to the earlier Division on the Committee of the Regions, in which the Government were defeated. I wish to refer to "a deal"—I use not my words but those of the Secretary of State for Scotland—between the Government and the Scottish National party. I have a letter from the Secretary of State to the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) which concludes:

"I hope therefore that we have the basis of a deal.
Yours sincerely, Ian."

Given that there was a clear deal between the Tory Government and the Scottish National party, is it not reasonable that this and any other correspondence should be placed in the Library and made available to both the House and the people of Scotland?

In 1979, when the Scottish National party voted with Mrs. Thatcher to bring down the then Labour Government, Jim Callaghan referred to turkeys voting for an early Christmas. Is there evidence that Christmas will be even earlier this year?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The hon. Gentleman will be well aware that what has taken place in Committee is not a matter for the Deputy Speaker. The Deputy Speaker cannot comment on it one way or another.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it further to that point of order or a new point of order?

Mr. Marlow: It is a new point of order. You and I share Northampton. How will you and I secure for our constituents representation on the Committee of the Regions equal to that which has been granted to the people of Scotland?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I do not need his help to look after my constituents.

Dr. Lewis Moonie (Kirkcaldy): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I fully appreciate the ruling that you gave on a previous point of order. Is it within the Standing Orders of the House for the leader of the Scottish National party to come to the House and make a statement outlining the reasons behind what he has done tonight?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already ruled that what happened in Committee has nothing to do with the Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Wallace: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You may be aware that earlier today Madam Speaker said how much she would deplore the leaking of provisions that would be in a forthcoming Government announcement. Can we have an undertaking from the Government Front Bench that the so-called deal between the Government and the Scottish National party is a leak of what the Government will announce tomorrow?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman heard Madam Speaker's ruling.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Are these new points of order?

Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A few moments ago the Government Whip reported progress, as he put it—*[Interruption.]* That is the expression that he used. Have the Government said that, before we resume the Committee stage, they will make a statement about what they intend to do as a result of what occurred today? Is it not necessary for us to have a statement of the Government's intention instead of continuing day in, day out, with the Committee stage when no purpose is served——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That has nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure that you are familiar with the phrase "parcel of rogues" to which we now add the phrase "treacherous trio". It is an important point that all future discussion on the Committee of the Regions should be predicated on the basis of information that is before hon. Members. How can we continue to discuss the Committee of the Regions without knowing what deals have been agreed and whether they have any validity in the light of the splendid vote that occurred this evening?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Chair is not involved in deals with any party.

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since the Division this evening, the Welsh nationalists have disappeared. Could you direct the police to carry out the necessary investigations as to their whereabouts?

Mr. Norman Hogg (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not rather depressing that the leader of the Scottish National party took the Tory bribe but did not get the pay-off? In the circumstances, would it be a good idea if we asked the Secretary of State for Scotland to come along so that he can publicly wash his hands of this rather unsavoury affair?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that everyone feels better for that.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft British Gas plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Nicholas Baker.]*

The House divided: Ayes 288, Noes 25.

Division No. 175] **[10.06 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael

Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Barnes, Harry
Boyce, Jimmy
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cummings, John
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Donohoe, Brian H.
Flynn, Paul
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Hood, Jimmy
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Waddesdon (Bypass)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Mackay.]*

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): It will take time out of the Adjournment debate.

Mr. Cryer: I would just like to ask whether you have received any notification of a Government statement, given that they have lost control of the House and cannot get their business through?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Walden.

10.19 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): It is with relief that we turn to the subject of the Waddesdon bypass in my constituency.

I should like to stress the concern about that bypass that is building up among the villagers of Waddesdon. I have a number of recent proofs of that concern, the most recent being now fewer than 500 letters—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Hon. Members should leave the Chamber quietly.

Mr. Walden: The most recent proof was the 500 letters that came from my constituents who live in that relatively small village. I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) is here, no doubt to demonstrate his solidarity on behalf of those villagers, even though the village is not within his constituency.

Further proof of the high feeling running in Waddesdon was a meeting of the villagers that I attended recently, which pulled in several hundred people. That was an unusual event in my constituency, because my constituents are cool-headed, but they are getting pretty excited and indignant about the traffic on the A41, on which the village lies. Mothers with young children in pushchairs attended that meeting because there is a strong feeling that increasing traffic on the road is becoming a danger to children.

The recent evidence of this increase in traffic is, of course, disputed by everyone concerned, as such evidence always is. I used the road quite a lot, and I have seen the evidence of that increase before my eyes. I have seen the evidence of recent figures that has been shown to me and that presented to me by the villagers.

There is also the evidence of common sense. Since the M40 extension was completed, the result has been, as a glance at the map will confirm, that the A41 through Waddesdon has become a very attractive route for people dodging between the M1 and the M40. Evidence of what can happen if things go wrong on that road, which has an extremely nasty bend, is often seen in crashes. Not so long ago, a particularly nastly crash involved a heavy articulated lorry, the effects of which on a semi-demolished house I remember witnessing.

My constituents in Waddesdon are also concerned about rail privatisation, because close to Waddesdon is the Calvert dumping site. Rubbish is transported by train from London, but my constituents fear that, should that line be in any way endangered by rail privatisation, that rubbish would then have to go by road, thereby increasing the traffic through Waddesdon.

It is worth noting that Waddesdon is the only major settlement on the A41 that has no bypass planned. At present, the well known Waddesdon manor stately home, which is normally open to the public, is closed. When it reopens, the flow of tourist traffic will add to the already enormous amounts of traffic build-up on that road.

In addition to the anxieties caused by that traffic problem, there are rumours and uncertainties about the Government's intentions for the east-west trunk route. There are different opinions in my constituency that naturally reflect the constituents' place of residence. As my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury will know, some people believe that the bypass should take the southern route. Others believe that it should take a more northerly route.

Many of my constituents in Waddesdon—I cannot speak for all of them—are in favour of using the A41 for the east-west route, partly because that would improve their prospects of gaining a bypass. However, my role this evening is to stress that, whatever the Government's intention on the east-west route, the people of Waddesdon deserve a bypass. I would welcome it if my hon. Friend the Minister would take this opportunity to shed some light on the Government's plans for the east-west route——

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): Hear, hear.

Mr. Walden: I hear my hon. Friend voicing a quiet "Hear, hear".

The lack of clarity about the Government's plans is causing much confusion and apprehension in various parts of my constituency, not least Waddesdon. Only last week I talked to constituents in Aston Abbotts, a small village, who have similar fears and uncertainties. The issue of the route of the bypass in Wing is still unresolved, and will be affected by the Government's east-west plans. Therefore, there is a common thread running through the concern of my constituents, whether they be from Waddesdon, Aston Abbotts or Wing.

I want to leave my hon. Friend the Minister plenty of time to respond, but I do not want him to be under any misapprehension about the strong feelings of my constituents. As he knows, I have been in touch with the Department of Transport on the matter, and I do not want my hon. Friend to be under the illusion that, if the east-west route takes a certain path, my constituents' concerns will subside. I want to make it clear that, whatever the Government's broader strategic intentions, there is an urgent need for a bypass at Waddesdon.

10.27 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Kenneth Carlisle): I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) has secured tonight's debate, as, for many years, he has shown his great concern for his constituents and for the residents of Waddesdon as they have fought for a bypass. I congratulate him on raising the subject this evening. I am also glad to see my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) present. In his short time in the House, he has developed a tenacity for the subject of communications in Buckinghamshire that I greatly respect.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham has written to me recently. This is a subject on which he has campaigned vigorously in the past with my predecessors.

I understand that there is currently considerable local speculation about the much wider issue of the possible line of the Department as proposed east-west route in this area. My hon. Friend may have received some information or opinion about the Department's current thinking on that route, but I have to say at the outset that I am still considering this whole question. I shall deal with this issue later in my speech, but only in the broadest terms.

As this is something on which I am still taking advice within the Department, preparatory to a full public consultation exercise, it would be premature, and not in my view helpful, to pre-empt that very necessary public debate now. We intend to hold a full public debate on the east-west route. I shall therefore focus on the specific matter that my hon. Friend has put before the House: a bypass scheme for the A41 trunk road at Waddesdon.

There is a very long history to this case, on which I shall not dwell. Although a development line for a bypass was established as long ago as 1956—for planning purposes—it has never been proceeded with. Some further work was carried out in the late 1970s to investigate a possible more northerly route, but it was halted in 1980 when the scheme did not secure a place in the national roads programme.

Since then, the Department has kept the situation under review, but a Waddesdon bypass scheme has never been part of the roads programme. Indeed, in 1982 the Department decided that it would no longer seek to protect the original development line, given that it had become outdated and that the prospects for developing a scheme remained remote.

There was a wholesale review of the capacity of the trunk road network in the late 1980s in the light of revised national forecasts of traffic growth. This led to the major expansion of the roads programme in the 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity". Even this was not sufficient to propel the Waddesdon bypass into the programme. We now have the largest trunk road construction programme that we have ever had, with the prospect that it will take us many years to complete and we shall not be able to complete all of it by the turn of the century.

Despite my hon. Friend's eloquent and forceful presentation, the case for Waddesdon looked at in isolation is not strong. The latest traffic data do not support the contention that there has been a significant change since the opening of the M40 extension to Birmingham in January 1991. Traffic counts taken on three occasions since that date show flows within a range of 10,000 to 11,000 vehicles a day. Comparable counts in 1989 and 1990 showed flows within a range of 9,500 to 10,500.

Within that slight increase in overall traffic, there has actually been a reduction in the numbers of heavy goods vehicles over the same period. The proportion of heavy goods vehicles is not particularly high and has declined since the extension of the M40. Nor is there a bad accident record to lend weight to the argument for a bypass.

It is one of the central themes of the Department's national roads programme to provide relief for communities subjected to high levels of through traffic and, in particular, heavy goods traffic. We have in our programme a very large number of bypasses; it is our wish to build bypasses and to relieve communities wherever possible. All schemes have to be economically justified.

On the basis of current traffic flows through Waddesdon, and in the absence of any significant growth as a specific effect of the extension of the M40, I do not believe that it would be easy to build and sustain an economically sound case for a Waddesdon bypass. As I made clear at the outset, that assessment is made on the merits of the case looked at in isolation, devoid of any more wide-ranging strategic issues that may have an impact on the area.

I have every sympathy with people who are affected by noise, disturbance and danger from traffic. As part of my job, I see many people who are so affected. Although prospects for a bypass are not good, that does not mean that nothing can be done to address those real local concerns about the effects of through traffic. I am certainly prepared to consider what other measures might be provided at lower cost to improve safety and enhance the local environment. My hon. Friend has pressed us on that count and has asked whether we can do anything else if we cannot provide a bypass.

The county council, as the Department's agent, has been invited to identify possible measures. That is a recent commission, following a local meeting in February. My hon. Friend attended that meeting which put a strong case for some measures. Until some detailed proposals have been made and considered by the Department, I am not able to say what measures might be introduced, but certainly we shall look at a range of traffic calming and environmental improvements. I know that my hon. Friend will carefully follow our progress on that.

Part of my hon. Friend's concern about the situation at Waddesdon is the future development of the Department's east-west route and the preferred corridor for completing the western section of the route to the M40. That matter also interests my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury. It is no secret that the choice for corridor development lies between a northerly route along the existing A41 and a southerly route along the A418 or A329 but, as I said, detailed comment would be premature and, I think, unhelpful at this stage. As my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham said, we have to make this choice.

None the less, it is fair comment to remind ourselves that two important segments of the east-west route have so far entailed development of the A418. I refer, of course, to the Leighton-Linslade bypass completed in 1991, and our present plans, as foreshadowed in the 1989 White Paper, for development of the A418 west of Aylesbury to Wing bypass. The decision on a route for the western end of the east-west route will be taken in the context of the benefits available in strategic terms.

On any scenario for development of the A41, I understand of course my hon. Friend's concern about the implications for further traffic growth. Equally, traffic growth would be a factor for the southerly route if it were chosen. I assure him that the selection process will take firmly into account the increased status of the road in strategic terms and, by association, the possible need to effect improvements to reflect that change.

We expect to go forward to public consultation on our west of Aylesbury to Wing bypass proposals in the summer. By that stage, we will be in a position to announce our findings on the corridor issue, which is, of course, central to the hopes of Waddesdon. I shall keep my hon. Friend advised of progress on our decisions about that important route. In the meantime, I am sorry that I cannot be more positive about a bypass for Waddesdon,

[Mr. Kenneth Carlisle]

but I assure my hon. Friend that we will look very carefully to see what else can be done to bring about an improvement for the residents of that community.

I hope that that puts the case fairly to my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham. If he examines the facts, I am sure that he will, in all justice, accept that, in the context of a busy programme throughout the country, Waddesdon is not as hard-pressed as many other communities that are to have a bypass. Nevertheless, I accept that the community has a good case for a better system, and we shall—having been pressed by my hon. Friend—carefully examine what improvements we can bring that community.

Overall, for the future the community will have to look for bigger improvements to our decision on the east-west corridor, which will come forward soon. I know that my hon. Friends will be anxious to see the decisions that are made in respect of that route.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham for raising the issue, and I hope that my explanation will at least be helpful to him and to his constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 9 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Procurement

1. **Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with how many United Kingdom companies his Department was involved in procurement contracts in 1992.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): My Department was involved in procurement contracts with some 7,000 United Kingdom companies in 1992. That figure excludes minor contracts placed by local establishments, details of which are not held centrally.

Ms. Eagle: Is it not the case that the decline in procurement volume due to "Options for Change" has led directly to the loss of 78,900 jobs since 1990, 900 of which were at Cammell Laird in Birkenhead which is currently facing closure? Will the Minister now pledge Government support for the creation of a defence diversification strategy in order to help convert those jobs to civil use, keep Cammell Laird open and ensure that we do not lose skills which are important to the British economy?

Mr. Aitken: I regret the loss of any defence jobs. The number of lost jobs since 1990 is approximately 40,000, considerably lower than the figure given by the hon. Lady. Like the hon. Lady, I lament the closure of Cammell Laird in her constituency because it has played a proud role in the history of British shipbuilding. However, it is not right for the Government to invent a diversification strategy. The owner of Cammell Laird, Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited, is already diversifying into areas such as oil rig technology. Defence diversification is best left to companies, not Government quangos.

Mr. Trotter: I thank my hon. Friend for visiting Swan Hunter last week. His sympathetic and understanding remarks were well received by the representatives of the work force whom he met there. They were encouraged by his statement that the helicopter carrier had not been cancelled and that the tendering process was continuing in good faith. Will my hon. Friend confirm that he was impressed by what he saw of the management-work force team and the quality of their work on the four Royal Navy ships being built in the yard?

Mr. Aitken: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I appreciated the chance to visit Swan Hunter in his good company. I can confirm that I was extremely impressed by the quality of the workmanship and the dedication of the work force. The landing platform helicopter project is still in our long-term costing. It is being reviewed in the light of defence resources, but I can assure my hon. Friend that the messages that he and the Swan Hunter work force gave me have been faithfully passed on throughout Whitehall.

Mr. Hutton: Is the Minister aware of the importance to many defence contractors of the batch 2 Trafalgar order? Can he confirm that that order remains part of the Government's programme and that it is his intention to replace all the Swiftsure class with the new batch 2 Trafalgars?

Mr. Aitken: I can confirm that the batch 2 Trafalgar project is in the long-term costing. All such projects depend on the availability of future defence resources, but I can confirm that it is in the programme. I fully understand its importance to the hon. Gentleman and to his constituents at Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Limited. VSEL has recently executed a design study contract which we are now studying in considering the way forward.

Mr. Conway: Will my hon. Friend take the time to consider the effectiveness of the demountable rack off-loading and pick-up system—DROPS—the battlefield ammunition resupply carrier, during the Gulf conflict, which is a useful and essential piece of kit? Will he bear in mind the need for flexibility in his Department as the chill winds of recession are banging around the country and consider the long-term future of that particular carrier which is built in Shrewsbury and whose future may be in jeopardy?

Mr. Aitken: A question about DROPS appears later on the Order Paper. The DROPS medium ability vehicle that entered service with the British Army in 1990 has put up an impressive performance, especially in the Gulf campaign. Overseas customers have been particularly impressed and are interested in its progress.

Mr. Foulkes: Will the Minister clear up a mystery worthy of Agatha Christie? What is he up to in respect of the Upholder class submarines? Will they be sold to Canada? Do we not need diesel submarines any more? Will they be sold at their full cost of £800 million? Will the receipts be used for the helicopter carrier? Is that not another illustration of the muddle and confusion at the Ministry of Defence, which has no defence strategy because there has been no defence review?

Mr. Aitken: I think that my reply should be, elementary my dear Hercule Poirot. That project, like many others in the long-term costing, is currently under consideration by Ministers, and no decisions have been taken.

Mr. Viggers: Is it not a fact that the moderates on the Labour Benches are a minority in their party—a party which consistently votes at its annual conference to cut defence expenditure? Should not those who really believe in defence and procurement jobs place their trust in the party that puts defence at the top of its priorities?

Hon. Members: Say no.

Mr. Aitken: I am choosing my words with care, because I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend, who highlights the continuing ambivalence and absurdity of the

Labour party, which calls for more jobs and orders and for a stronger defence policy in Westminster, but then, at its annual conference, votes for cuts of £6 billion in the defence budget. That is the theatre of the absurd, and it fools nobody ultimately.

Strategic Review

2. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will institute a full strategic review of Britain's current defence requirements.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): We continue to keep our defence policy as a whole under review, both with regard to the strategic situation and in respect of specific commitments.

Mr. Corbyn: Does the Secretary of State agree that it is time for a serious review of Britain's defence expenditure, which now totals more than £23 billion a year? Should not we cancel the nuclear missile programme and consign all nuclear missiles back to base as part of a programme of worldwide disarmament? Should not we try to cut conventional expenditure to at least the European average, which would save £6 billion a year? Should not we also ensure that skilled workers who are at present manufacturing weapons of mass destruction and other forms of armaments are put to making socially useful products, including materials for the health service and housing industry—and recognise that world peace is best achieved by people working for peace rather than by arming themselves for war?

Mr. Rifkind: It is good to hear the legitimate voice of the Labour party speaking without fear or favour, representing the views of the Labour party conference, and no doubt putting in even more eloquent form the words that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) would like to say but dare not.

Mr. Wilkinson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend re-examine the respective benefits of a static, costly and inflexible presence on the central front in Germany—subsidising in effect German jobs—as against the flexibility, mobility and fire power of the landing platform helicopter assault carrier, which can be sent anywhere in the world when required, either to preserve the peace or to intervene in case of war? Surely the benefits are to be found with the latter rather than the former.

Mr. Rifkind: We certainly recognise that priorities have changed, which is why the strength of the British Army of the Rhine, for example, is to be reduced from 60,000 men to 23,000 men, and the reason for a 50 per cent. reduction in our dual capable aircraft and other changes of that kind. My hon. Friend's general proposition is already well recognised and is built in to the plans and programmes that we currently have available.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Does not the Secretary of State owe it to his own reputation, if not to the House, to show a little more intellectual rigour in the matter of a defence review? At a time when resources are falling, how will we be able properly to match commitments to resources unless there is a robust analysis of our commitments or there is likely to be? When the Chief Secretary to the Treasury told the House a few weeks ago that it should be willing to think the unthinkable, did not that apply to defence as much as to health?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course it is desirable to look rigorously at each and every element of our defence policy. However, the hon. and learned Gentleman's yearning for a formal defence review appears to be based on the belief that such a review would provide a once-and-for-all assessment of our defence needs that would attract unanimous support. In fact, controversy would remain, many people would dismiss the review's conclusions as out of date as soon as the print had dried on the paper and we should be left only with a considerable increase in uncertainty and instability.

Let me emphasise to the hon. and learned Gentleman that, although we must examine specific components on a continuing basis, the world changes from year to year. The idea that a defence review would somehow answer all the problems in a simple and straightforward way is naive and unrealistic.

Mr. Bill Walker: When conducting his regular on-going reviews, will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind that, below a certain level, any outfit or organisation ceases to have a critical mass? Will he remember that the Royal Air Force has already carried out a one third reduction in its all-weather air defence capability and a 38 per cent. reduction in its long-range strike capability? Even in the current changing circumstances, it should not be a candidate for further reductions which are likely to cause it to fall below the level that will make it viable in future.

Mr. Rifkind: I properly attach great importance to the needs of the RAF. My hon. Friend should be reassured by the news that the RAF's single most important project —the Eurofighter 2000—is to continue, thus ensuring that the RAF will be able to cope with the responsibilities imposed on it for generations to come.

Dr. David Clark: In view of the story emanating from the Secretary of State's Department last week that the Royal Marines are to lose their landing capabilities, and this week's story that the Parachute Regiment would lose its parachutes, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us what daft scheme he has cooked up for this week? Has he thought how much money he could save by depriving the RAF of aircraft? Does not all the nonsense emanating from his Department prove our point about the need for a full-scale strategic defence review, so that the shape of British defence spending may actually match our defence needs?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is not at his most impressive when he relies on unattributed press rumours for his questions. He is well aware that those who call for formal defence reviews normally do so because they are scared of commiting themselves to any individual defence policy.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recall that, in January 1992, an Opposition Treasury spokesman said that defence cuts could arguably become the North sea oil of the 1990s? Does not that comment put in context many of the current criticisms—

Madam Speaker: Order. I think that the hon. Gentleman knows better than to question a Minister about policy for which he has no responsibility.

Trident

3. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Government now intend to make a statement on the award of the Trident contract.

Mr. Aitken: We will announce our proposals for future refitting arrangements—including those for Trident—as soon as possible, but I do not expect it to be until after the Easter recess.

Mr. Taylor: The Minister will not be surprised to learn that, as a west country Liberal Democrat, I believe that Devonport has put forward the best bid. The real problem, however, is the extraordinary series of delays in the making of the announcement. Families—both those throughout Devon and Cornwall, who depend on Devonport, and those in Scotland, who depend on Rosyth—are being forced to wait with increasing uncertainty about their future. That has caused them all great difficulties. Can the Minister be a little more specific about when those people can expect a decision, and will he explain the series of delays that have taken place so far?

Mr. Aitken: I have sympathy for dockyard employees and their families: I know that the uncertainty is causing them concern. None the less, I think it a little churlish of the hon. Gentleman not to accept that a great deal of uncertainty was lifted by my right hon. and learned Friend's written answer on 9 February, when he made it clear that we were now planning to continue with two royal dockyards. We are therefore no longer in a life-or-death situation at either Devonport or Rosyth.

As for the timing of the announcement, we hope to be able to make it as soon as possible after the Easter recess. The first reason for the delays that have taken place so far is the need for us to be sure that we can accept the figures in the proposals as sound and certain, on behalf of the taxpayer. Secondly, new information has been coming in, not least from the dockyard managing companies themselves, and that new information has taken extra time to evaluate.

Mr. Streeter: Is my hon. Friend aware, none the less, that despite the assurances given some weeks ago that both dockyards would remain open, there is genuine concern in Plymouth and the far south-west about the delay? There is recognition that nuclear work is the jewel in the crown. Can my hon. Friend therefore assure me that this decision will be made as soon as is humanly possible? Is my hon. Friend further aware—*[Interruption.]* Finally, is my hon. Friend aware that the Liberal Democrats' defence policy would scrap Trident and that there would be no choice——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is asking a question for which, again, the Minister has no responsibility. The Minister will answer only the first part of that question.

Mr. Aitken: It is perfectly fair for my hon. Friend to point out that a Liberal Government, if we were ever to have one, would have no Trident submarines to refit at all. Therefore, this is a highly academic question.

To answer my hon. Friend's principal point, I can confirm that we hope to make the announcement as soon as is humanly possible after the Easter recess.

Mr. Cohen: Will the Minister comment on reports that the United States is proposing to limit production of Trident missiles and that a Bill is already before Congress? Would that not increase enormously the unit cost, including the cost to Britain? The reports talk of a figure of £200 million extra. Would not that be an even greater waste of British taxpayers' money?

Mr. Aitken: I have to give the hon. Gentleman some news which I am sorry to say he will probably find disappointing—that he should not believe all that he reads in the morning newspapers. We have long been aware of the fact that the United States proposes to reduce the annual production rate of Trident D5 missiles. We are confident that there is no risk of a significant variation in United Kingdom missile costs as a result.

4. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the progress of the sea trials of the Trident submarine.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom's first Trident submarine, Vanguard, completed her contractor's sea trials in January. The trials were highly successful, with all major systems and equipments performing well. This was a particularly impressive achievement for the first of a new class.

Mr. Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept that that answer will be warmly welcomed by all those who recognise that the nuclear deterrent has kept the peace of the world for over 45 years? Does he also accept that that would not have happened if he had listened to the Labour party and to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) when he was a member of CND?

Mr. Aitken: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's trenchant support of the Trident programme which has been an enduring feature of our debates and of Question Time for many years. I agree entirely that we need an absolutely first-class independent nuclear deterrent system to take us ahead for the next 30 years. I agree, too, that the Conservative party is the only party which is able to provide such a system, in terms of its political will and commitment.

Mr. Cryer: What does the Minister say to people who argue that countries such as Canada, for example, will neither manufacture nor deploy nuclear weapons? Canada, under a Conservative Prime Minister and Government, and 150 other nations take the same view and have signed a solemn, international obligation to maintain a nuclear-free area. Does not what the Minister has said prejudice that treaty? Is it not terrible that a Minister can stand up at the Dispatch Box to support, to the cheers of his Back Benchers, a nuclear weapons system that involves mass extermination on an unprecedented scale? Is it not immoral for anyone to support such a policy?

Mr. Aitken: There are different views of morality from that held by the hon. Gentleman. I think that he was referring, in his rather sweeping assertions earlier, to the non-proliferation treaty and, in particular, to article 6. We accept that we must undertake to pursue negotiations on the cessation of the nuclear arms race in good faith and as early as possible, but we think that disarmament can be achieved only step by step in verifiable stages. We do not think that the time is right, in the present atmosphere of

strategic uncertainty, either to abandon our nuclear weapons or even to abandon the testing that keeps them safe and credible.

EH101 Helicopter

5. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress with the development of the EH101 helicopter and its variants.

Mr. Aitken: The collaborative development with Italy of the EH101 aircraft is progressing well.

Mr. Nicholson: Despite the blase remarks made earlier by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), my hon. Friend will be aware that many people in the south-west are concerned about employment in defence industries. He will also be aware that a number of my constituents work at Westland in Yeovil. The Government have spent £1·4 billion on developing the EH101 and have already ordered 44 Merlins for the Royal Navy, so why should there be a delay in placing the contracts for the 25 utility support helicopters for the Royal Air Force when the money for those was allocated by the former Secretary of State for Defence, Lord Younger, in 1987?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend's pride in the EH101 helicopter and its variants, and in the craftsmanship and skill achieved at Westland, in his constituency—or rather, where many of his constituents work—is entirely justified. But his impatience, although understandable, is not entirely justified, in view of the ministerial duty to achieve value for money on such a massive procurement project. The right course is to have a fair competition, and we intend to hold one as soon as possible for Britain's support helicopter requirements.

Dr. David Clark: Does the Minister recall a previous Conservative Secretary of State announcing to the House on 9 April 1987 that the Government intended to order 25 utility EH101 helicopters? In view of the desperate and dire shortage of helicopters in our armed forces, what has happened to that order?

Mr. Aitken: The hon. Gentleman fails to recognise how much the world and the strategic environment has changed since 1987. For helicopters alone, we face a wider spread of less predictable scenarios, in terms of the distance that troops may have to cover, the equipment that they will carry, the terrain over which they will have to fly, and the nature and intensity of the air defence threat that they may face. It would be remiss of us not to take account of those changes in reassessing our support helicopter requirement. I am sorry that that has taken rather a long time.

United Nations Commitments

6. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet the United States Secretary for Defence to discuss international obligations arising from United Nations commitments.

Mr. Rifkind: I expect to meet Les Aspin, the United States Defence Secretary, at the meeting between NATO Defence Ministers and those of the co-operation partners on 29 March. We will take this opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues.

Sir Michael Neubert: If the rather improbable patchwork quilt of a peace plan for Bosnia finds acceptance with all parties, will Her Majesty's Government contribute a contingent of troops to ensure its enforcement? Would it not be regrettable if one consequence of that were a further reduction in the number of Territorial Army battalions, and in our Reserve forces generally?

Mr. Rifkind: If a ceasefire is agreed between the various warring parties in Bosnia, the first and crucial test will be whether it is a genuine ceasefire, respected by the various factions on the ground. We have seen ceasefires in the past which have not in practice turned out to represent any change in circumstances.

The future of TA battalions is an important issue that must be considered on its merits. I assure my hon. Friend that any thoughts on that matter will be given the most careful consideration, because of the importance that we attach to the Reserves.

Mr. Byers: Does the Secretary of State accept that, in order to meet our international obligations within the United Nations, we shall need to maintain our amphibious capability and does he recognise that the helicopter carrier will have a vital role to play in ensuring that we can do so? Does he agree that that carrier, and the order for it, is vital not only for our future defence needs but to secure thousands of badly needed jobs in areas of high unemployment such as Tyneside?

Mr. Rifkind: We have an amphibious capability already, without the helicopter carrier; the question is whether a carrier would provide a viable improvement in that capability. It is an expensive item and it is at present in the programme. We are considering that and other issues in the context of the overall resources available to the Ministry of Defence.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: Is not it a fact that in fulfilling United Nations commitments in Bosnia, British forces have stripped themselves of the last of their useful utility helicopters? We are desperately short of such helicopters, as the Select Committee on Defence has pointed out. Am I to understand from the previous answer that the Government are considering either the 23-year-old Chinook or the 30-year-old Puma designs as alternatives to the modern and up-to-date EH101?

Mr. Rifkind: We recognise that the helicopter is a most important and essential requirement for the armed forces in the 1990s and I assure my hon. Friend that we recognise that for the Army and other services to carry out their responsibilities, it is important that they should be provided with the number and type of helicopters necessary to deal with the likely challenges that they will face in the years to come.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Unless the Secretary of State is prepared to distance himself from the statement by the Secretary-General of the United Nations yesterday—that he will ask the United Nations to enforce a settlement if there is no peace settlement in Bosnia fairly soon—is not an urgent review of United States and United Kingdom defence requirements necessary?

Mr. Rifkind: I am very willing to distance myself from any statement that suggests that international forces, including those of the United Kingdom, should be used in

a combat role to enforce peace in Bosnia. We are prepared to give serious consideration to the help that we could give if a genuine ceasefire were delivered on the ground in Bosnia, but any proposals for a combat role do not accord with the policy of Her Majesty's Government.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, in the absence of a suitable command structure in the United Nations for the delivery of military and humanitarian missions throughout the world, NATO is uniquely well equipped to carry on its excellent work as a force for good in the world and to organise the delivery of such future missions?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is entirely correct. NATO is an institution and an organisation which has tremendous experience of co-operation between countries that are part of the alliance. It has very valuable assets which can be used in co-operation with the international community and I believe that it should always be willing to consider seriously requests for its assets to be made available, when the interests of international peace and stability could be advanced in that way.

Dr. Reid: Despite whatever differences we may have, all parties in the House have learnt one thing from our debates on defence—that any rational defence policy must be based on a match between resources and commitments. Is not it a sad fact that when the Secretary of State meets the United States Defence Secretary, he will have to explain to him, among other things, the fact that Britain, as a permanent member of the Security Council, was unable to deploy ground troops as part of the United Nations relief operation in Somalia? Is not it clear to the Secretary of State that our armed forces, especially the infantry, are still too overstretched? Does not he see that as an indictment of his presidency over the Ministry of Defence and of the way in which the non-review has been conducted?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not need to give any such explanation. The decision not to send ground forces to Somalia was not taken because of the absence of such forces. We could have sent a battalion if we had thought it appropriate. We decided that the best contribution that we could make to Somalia was with RAF Hercules. Our judgment was similar to that of the United States, which decided not to send ground forces to Bosnia—not because they did not have any such forces, but because they believed that there were other ways in which they could make a contribution.

NATO

7. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his most recent meeting with the United States Defence Secretary about out-of-area commitments by NATO.

Mr. Rifkind: As I said a few moments ago, I hope to meet Mr. Aspin shortly.

Mr. Taylor: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that there are still considerable uncertainties, on the fringe and out of area of NATO, especially in the Balkans, the Gulf and the southern areas of the Commonwealth of Independent States? In those circumstances is not it vital that NATO and the Western European Union should work closely together, in case they need to be used to resolve or calm down those problems and should not we work closely with the French on such matters, through an integrated command structure, whoever might be the commanding officer?

Mr. Rifkind: I agree that it is desirable that NATO and the WEU should work closely together. However, we should work towards a situation in which one or other of those organisations makes a contribution in respect of the international community. I hope that we shall not have a repetition of the situation that occurred in the Adriatric, where both organisations were making provision simultaneously. That was an inadequate and unfortunate use of scarce resources of all the countries concerned.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: In an earlier answer to a Labour Member on out-of-area commitments, the Secretary of State seemed to disagree with an answer given previously by the Minister of State for Defence Procurement to a Conservative Member, in respect of landing platform helicopter procurement. The Minister of State confirmed that the vessel has been reinstated in his Department's long-term costings. Will the Secretary of State confirm that it will be ordered on time this autumn?

Mr. Rifkind: The proposal for a landing platform helicopter was never taken out of the programe. My hon. Friend and I have both said to the House, as we have done on previous occasions, that that project, with a whole range of others, has to be considered in the context of the long-term costings that we normally carry out at this time of the year.

Mr. Dickens: With the British armed forces dispersed throughout the world to meet our obligations under NATO and the United Nations, is not it clear to the House and the country that it is sheer common sense to have the Trident submarine cruising beneath the oceans of the world, ready to strike any aggressor towards the United Kingdom? Why do the Opposition, time and again, run down our defences? The Conservatives are the only party which would defend the realm.

Mr. Rifkind: It is indeed the case that the stalwart defence policy that Conservative Governments have pursued over the years, despite the bitter opposition of the Labour party, has made an important contribution to the collapse of the Warsaw pact, the end of the cold war and the resulting enhanced security for the people of this island.

British Forces (Germany)

8. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his estimates of the total annual cost of British forces in Germany for each year from 1990 to 1995 and the proportion of that covered by offsetting arrangements.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Archie Hamilton): The total cost of the British Army of the Rhine and RAF Germany for 1991-92 was £1,966 million and our estimates for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are £1,706 million and £1,543 million respectively. As a result of changes in budgetary procedures, there is no directly comparable figure for 1989-90 or 1990-91. While no direct offset payments have been made by the Federal Republic of

Germany since 1980, the German Government make a substantial contribution to the upkeep of our forces, mainly through the provision of rent-free land and accommodation.

Mr. Mitchell: Why do not the Government come clean about their intentions concerning our commitment in Germany? What is the strategic justification for having our troops there at all? What role are they to play in the future? Why do not the Government tell us how they justify the necessary budget provision? Does not the lack of information prove that we need a full review of our defence commitment, instead of day-to-day improvising by the Government?

Mr. Hamilton: The strategic justification for the Rhine Army and, indeed, for the support of the Royal Air Force in Germany is that these forces are our contribution to the rapid reaction corps, which is at the heart of NATO. We consider that the future security of these islands and of Europe as a whole lies in maintaining NATO, the Atlantic alliance, with American involvement in the defence of Europe.

Mr. Brazier: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in considering these costs, it is essential that we do not have a repetition of the 1920s, when American and British forces were withdrawn from the continent of Europe at a time when that continent was moving into political instability? Does he agree that, against that background, the best possible aspect of our conventional forces is our commitment to mainland Europe?

Mr. Hamilton: That is absolutely correct. We can never divorce the security of the United Kingdom from that of Europe as a whole. Indeed, it is very difficult to make it clear to the United States of America that we want to see that country involved in the defence of Europe and playing a role in our future defence requirements if we are to withdraw our troops from Germany, which is right at the heart of NATO.

Bosnia

9. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with representatives of the Government of the United States of America on the use of military equipment in Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: Both bilaterally and at the United Nations and in other international forums, I and my officials have had many discussions with representatives of the United States Government about developments in Bosnia and about the current operations there under the auspices of the United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Has President Clinton totally ruled out the use of military force in Bosnia to end the ethnic cleansing? Equally, has the United Kingdom totally ruled out the use of military force?

Mr. Rifkind: The United States Government have said that they are prepared to consider making a contribution with regard to the implementation of any ceasefire that might be agreed between the parties in Bosnia. They have not yet said explicitly whether that involves the deployment of ground forces. As for the United Kingdom, as I said in answer to an earlier question, there is no possibility of our providing ground forces for a combat role in Bosnia. We are prepared to consider what contributions we may make in the event of an effective ceasefire being implemented and seen to be working on the ground.

Mr. Robert Banks: On the possible deployment of American, and more especially NATO, peacekeeping ground forces in Bosnia, will my right hon. and learned Friend exercise great caution bearing in mind the fact that peacekeeping ground forces can be tied down for many years? There are heavy costs involved. Is not it better for such peacekeeping to be done under the auspices of the United Nations, given the wider compilation of forces that it can deploy?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is entirely correct to urge caution with regard to any deployment of United Kingdom forces to the former Yugoslavia. I believe that it is also the case that the United Nations should be the sponsoring body for any initiative of this kind. It has been the experience in many previous United Nations operations that an initial commitment can have implications for years to come.

I believe that the time has arrived for the United Nations to consider rotating its forces to carry out its obligations in various theatres around the world. There should no longer be an assumption in any part of the world that countries that contribute to a United Nations operation should continue to contribute as long as the United Nations is present in that particular territory.

DROPS

10. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of the demountable rack-off loading and pick-up system.

Mr. Aitken: Negotiations with the receiver of Leyland DAF, which we hope will result in the completion of the order for medium mobility DROPS vehicles at Leyland, are in progress.

Mr. Hall: The Government have a contract with Leyland DAF to provide this particular system at a cost of £387 million, of which £80 million has already been spent. Will the Minister confirm that Dr. McIntosh, the chief of defence procurement, has written to the Department of Trade and Industry to say that it is in the taxpayers' best interests if the production of this system remains at Leyland DAF? What response has Dr. McIntosh had from the DTI?

Mr. Aitken: The chief of defence procurement does, of course, consult Ministers and did so before writing that particular letter. It is our hope that the order can be completed at Leyland. It is encouraging that the receivers have managed to restart some production, including that of DROPS vehicles. We are working with the receivers to see how we can best facilitate the completion of the order, which is in both our best interests.

Mr. Martlew: On 12 February, in a written reply to a question regarding the future of Leyland DAF, the Minister stated that a preliminary assessment was being carried out with regard to the fact that the MOD had ordered 2,400 Army vehicles that had yet to be delivered by Leyland DAF. Did that assessment state that there was

an urgent need for those vehicles and that if Leyland DAF did not carry out the order there would be a considerable delay in delivering them? Did that assessment also point out the possibility that the order could go to the continent if it was not met by Leyland DAF?

Mr. Aitken: I do not think that the assessment was quite as far ranging and sweeping as the hon. Gentleman suggests. I shall certainly check the true position. The fact is that in the present unhappy situation we are co-operating to the full with the present receivers of Leyland DAF.

Royal Irish Regiment

11. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time strength of the home service battalions of the Royal Irish Regiment, the former Ulster Defence Regiment; and if he will make a statement on the current progress of reorganisation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: As at 28 February 1993, the strength of the full-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment, home service, was 112 officers and 2,789 soldiers. The strength of the part-time element was 136 officers and 2,564 soldiers.

The reorganisation that followed the formation of the Royal Irish Regiment is proceeding well.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister knows that the part-time element is vital to the success of the regiment. Could he advise some of the regular officers who have recently been posted to it to revise the excessive training schedules that some of them are operating? Former UDR soldiers have decades of operational experience, more so than some of the officers in question. There is a limit to the amount of time that can be spared for training unless one wants to drive the part-timers out of the regiment, which I assume the Minister does not want to do. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Hamilton: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the part-time element of the Royal Irish Regiment is essential for the future of the regiment and gives us the reserve capability that can be called up if at any time it should be needed. I know that the part-time soldiers are concerned about the amount of training that they have to do, but that is true of all elements of the British Army: we have to ensure that our soldiers are fully trained. I am afraid that that is one of the requirements we make of them, although I know that they feel that they would be better employed on operational duties. I cannot give the hon. Member the satisfaction that he wants. We must ensure that all our soldiers are properly trained for the tasks that they are asked to do.

Madam Speaker: Order. The House is particularly noisy today. I should be much obliged if hon. Members would now settle down.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Sir Roger Moate:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Sir Roger Moate: Does my right hon. Friend agree that to sign up to the social chapter would inflict incalculable damage on British business and hold back economic recovery? Will he confirm that he will continue to resist the social chapter and can I tell him that in doing so he certainly has my support and should have the support of everyone on this side of the House?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about that. The social chapter would be bad for Britain. It would damage British industry, choke off foreign investment and destroy jobs. I have to say to the House that delay in ratifying the Maastricht treaty would do exactly the same thing. The treaty is in the national interest and we shall pursue it. We want to be inside Europe and outside the social charter.

Mr. John Smith: Bearing in mind the widespread support for the Committee of the Regions to be composed of elected representatives, including support for that proposition from the Tory-controlled local authority associations, what on earth did the Prime Minister think he was doing in opposing an amendment that any real democrat should have supported?

The Prime Minister: It was a very bad amendment and it was a very bad amendment for this reason: we made it perfectly clear in the debate that we are not against the inclusion of elected local government representatives, but there are others, including business men, who could add value to its work. That would add an element of flexibility and other partners in Europe have come to similar conclusions. Only Holland and Greece have so far made their nominations to the committee and neither of those countries has confined its membership to elected representatives.

Mr. John Smith: Does not the Prime Minister understand that it was his own foolishness and obstinacy which led him to oppose an amendment which, if he had an ounce of judgment, he could have accepted months ago?

The Prime Minister: The reason why the right hon. and learned Gentleman this afternoon takes that view is quite clear. He is embarrassed that he has neglected his principles yet again on this Bill. I will tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman what this country cannot afford: the lost jobs, the lost investment and the lost influence that would be put at risk if we were seen to turn our backs on this treaty and our place in Europe, as he and his vote last night indicate that he would do.

Mr. John Smith: Is not the right hon. Gentleman a fine one to talk about delay, when he promised the hon. Member for Great Yarmouth (Mr. Carttiss) that Third Reading would be delayed until the Danish referendum? Is

not the painful truth for the Prime Minister that far from being stabbed in the back, as he complains he has been, he has shot himself in the foot?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has said one thing and done another on Europe time after time and in this country and, in Europe, no one will ever trust him again on this issue.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Will my right hon. Friend take this opportunity to congratulate the police on their superb achievement in finding a major hoard of Semtex and in making a number of connected arrests? Does he agree that the defence of society against murder by terrorists is a responsibility of every man and woman and every citizen —including Labour party Members, who until now have continually refused to support the prevention of terrorism Act?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, the Labour party will soon have the opportunity to improve on that record. The Opposition have now voted against the prevention of terrorism Act on 11 occasions. Unless they vote with us tomorrow on that Act they should pipe down on crime for good.

Q2. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Welsh: Is the Prime Minister aware of the devastation caused by water cut-offs to tens of thousands of individuals and families in England and Wales? Will he guarantee that there will be no change in Scots law to allow any such domestic cut-offs in Scotland, particularly as part of any Tory plans to steal, privatise or franchise Scottish water? *[Interruption.]* It is obvious that this lot do not care, judging by the noise that they make, but we do.

The Prime Minister: I can give the hon. Gentleman no comfort on that point. Privatisation means a better, more efficient service for the consumer and no more subsidies from the taxpayer. I have no reason to doubt that water privatisation in Scotland will be effective and efficient, as elsewhere.

Mrs. Peacock: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in 1992 the United Kingdom clothing industry exported goods worth £2·25 billion, an increase of 8·5 per cent? Is not that a fine example of our first quality manufacturing industry?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend about that. There is no doubt that the clothing industry and many other manufacturing industries have dramatically increased their exports, not least as a result of the changed economic climate and the changed management structures in so many companies.

Q3. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Does the Prime Minister consider that there is any connection between the prevailing values of the nation and the prevailing values of the Government? Is not there a clear connection between record levels of crime and social breakdown and this Government, who have consistently, in every policy since 1979, appealed to personal selfishness, personal greed and looking after number one?

The Home Secretary talks about dealing with nasty pieces of work. Is not it true that this country has been run by some nasty pieces of work for the past 14 years and that we are now having to deal with the social consequences?

The Prime Minister: In the 1980s the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends blamed affluence for crime. These days they tend to blame unemployment for crime. When, if ever, will they blame the criminal, who is truly responsible?

Sir George Gardiner: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, apart from Maastricht, he enjoys the united support of this party for the Asylum Bill; the Education Bill; the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill; the National Lottery etc. Bill; with one exception, the Railways Bill; the Chancellor's autumn statement; and his leadership?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right to point to huge areas of agreement and to the enormous extent to which this year's parliamentary programme has already passed through this House and is in another place. I look forward to completing the rest of our programme, including the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Q4. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Chisholm: Will the Prime Minister give a categorical assurance that, whatever else he may try to impose on the Scottish people, he will never seek to change the law which makes the obscenity of water privatisation illegal in Scotland? Will he also give an assurance that he will do not deals on that or any other issue with the Scottish National party? If he does, may we have a copy of the letter, as happened last night?

The Prime Minister: I must say that when a really substantial deal was done between the Labour party and minority parties, it was in 1970 and it was done by the right hon. and learned Gentleman who is now the Leader of the Opposition.

As far as water privatisation is concerned, I made my view clear a few moments ago and it will remain as I stated it.

Q5. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Faber: Has my right hon. Friend seen the latest Institute of Directors survey, which shows that optimism among business directors about the future of their companies is now at an all-time high since August 1988? Does he agree that that is encouraging news for economic recovery and shows that confidence is returning to businesses, despite the best efforts of Opposition Members to talk Britain down?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right and the number of Opposition Members who were scoffing at the

good news he just set out illustrates his point more clearly than anything else. The Institute of Directors survey comes on top of an optimistic survey by the CBI—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may not like that, but it is true. They do not want to know that retail sales rose 1·4 per cent. in January, that car registrations were up 16 per cent. in February and that housing starts and completions are up. They know that good news for the country is bad news for them.

Mr. Garrett: Is not it the hallmark of a discredited Prime Minister always to say that anybody who criticises him or his policies is unpatriotic?

The Prime Minister: Only when it is untrue.

Q6. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Arnold: Is not the decision of the Home Secretary to publish league tables of the relative performances of our police forces welcome, not least at a time when the Government are spending more than ever on the police and when there are more policemen on the streets? Surely the ordinary citizen is entitled to know the relative performance of his local police force.

The Prime Minister: I believe that he is so entitled and we intend to ensure that he can. I hope that hon. Members in all parts of the House will support that and I hope that Opposition Members will not fight the right to give more information to the public in the way they have fought every other right to give more information to the public. They are in favour of freedom of information only in the abstract, not in the reality.

Q7. **Mr. Rooney:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Rooney: Is the Prime Minister aware that tomorrow it will be 22 weeks since the President of the Board of Trade promised to intervene before breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner? In view of his absolute lack of intervention in those 22 weeks, are we to assume that he has been on hunger strike, or has there been a military coup?

The Prime Minister: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has been asleep for 22 weeks. Let me remind him of some of the things that have happened. There has been the autumn statement, increased capital allowances, the abolition of car tax, maintained capital expenditure, a low inflation rate, low interest rates, competitive exchange rates, pushing towards an agreement on GATT and a large number of tours abroad to sell British business. Where has the hon. Gentleman been that he has missed every one of those things?

Q8. **Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: Has my right hon. Friend noticed the reports that the Holland Park school, one-time flagship of trendy 1960s educational teaching, has now started to change tack? Will he contrast that with the support it is now giving to the excellent educational reforms which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education is pushing through against the rubbishy education policies coming from the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I have not seen that report, but I certainly very much welcome it. There is growing recognition that the damaging and discreditable theories of the 1960s so admired by the Opposition belong in the history books, but certainly no longer belong in the classrooms. Even the pioneers of those theories recognise that and I hope that soon everyone will acknowledge it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. The House knows that points of order are taken after statements.

Scottish Government (White Paper)

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): With permission, I should like to make a statement about Scottish constitutional issues.

As the House will know, since the general election—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House will appreciate that this is yet another important statement to which Members wish to listen. Will those Members who are leaving, including Members who are having conversations across Benches on both sides of the House, please leave quickly and quietly? Perhaps we can have the doors closed so that we can hear what is going on.

Mr. Lang: With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about Scottish constitutional issues.

As the House will know, since the general election the Government have been conducting a wide-ranging examination of Scotland's place in the United Kingdom and the way our Westminster Parliament works for Scotland. I am today placing before the House a White Paper setting out our conclusions—"Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good".

The Act of Union of 1707 secured for the Scottish people a strong and special place within the United Kingdom. It guaranteed the continuance of Scotland's separate legal, educational and local government systems. The more recent establishment of the Scottish Office itself, as a Department responsible for administering much of Scotland's government, is another illustration of the capacity of the Union to accommodate—indeed, to encourage—diversity. Equally, the Union has enabled Scotland to participate fully in the affairs of the United Kingdom, and Scots have done so to considerable effect. The United Kingdom is a partnership of peoples which has achieved great things and from which all its constituent parts have benefited.

The initiative known as taking stock has led us to come forward with a range of proposals aimed at reinforcing the Union and Scotland's place within it.

First, recognising Scotland's separate legal system and its other legislative needs, the Government propose a number of initiatives to improve the existing parliamentary arrangements for handling Scottish business. The Scottish Grand Committee at present has powers to debate Scottish matters and the Scottish estimates and to take the Second Reading debates of Scottish legislation. It is also empowered to meet in Edinburgh.

We propose to build on these arrangements, providing for up to 12 general debates each Session, with the Opposition parties selecting the subject for debate on a set number of occasions, though, of course, Scottish matters, like Scottish legislation, will where appropriate continue to be debatable on the Floor. We also propose a new procedure allowing for debates on affirmative resolutions and on prayers against negative resolutions to be referred when appropriate to the Scottish Grand Committee.

The arrangements enabling the Committee to handle Scottish legislation will remain unchanged, with any Second Reading vote being taken formally on the Floor of the House. The Report stage and Third Reading debate will also continue to be taken on the Floor of the House in the usual way.

We further believe that the Secretary of State's responsibilities have become sufficiently wide to justify augmenting these arrangements by proposing that from time to time sessions of questions to Scottish Office Ministers be held in the Scottish Grand Committee in addition to those that take place every four weeks in this House. These sessions could be held either at Westminster or in Scotland.

We also propose that, at the end of each meeting of the Committee, there should be an opportunity for an Adjournment debate specifically on matters of concern to Scotland. It may occasionally be appropriate also for statements to be made by Scottish Office Ministers to the Scottish Grand Committee. In addition, we propose to establish a new procedure to enable the Scottish Grand Committee to invite the Scottish Office Minister in another place and also the Lord Advocate to give evidence before it on matters within their fields of responsibility.

Some of these changes will require amendments to the Standing Orders of both Houses, and we will bring these forward for debate in due course, having first consulted Opposition parties in the usual way.

Standing Orders of the House already contain a provision that enables Bills to be referred after Second Reading to a Special Standing Committee. We consider that this provision can provide a particularly appropriate mechanism for scrutinising some Scottish Bills and we propose its wider use for some Scottish legislation in future, with provision for the evidence-taking sessions to be held where appropriate in Scotland.

Taken together, I believe that these measures will lead to a significant improvement in the handling of parliamentary business relating to Scotland, in a way which is less remote, which is more responsive to Scottish priorities and concerns, and which may relieve some of the pressures on the Floor of the House. I stress, however, that in all these procedural changes Scottish Ministers will remain fully accountable to the House, and the Scottish Grand Committee will remain wholly a Committee of the House. The integrity of Parliament will and must remain intact.

We also propose changes in the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Scottish Office. Recognising the important role of Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the local enterprise companies and their capacity to meet local needs in the delivery of the Government's training schemes, from April next year the responsibility for training policy in Scotland will be transferred to the Secretary of State for Scotland, within the framework of the Government's overall strategic priorities, initiatives and policies.

Responsibility for the Scottish Arts Council will be transferred to the Scottish Office from the Department of National Heritage, also with effect from April 1994. We also propose to transfer the ownership of Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd. from the Civil Aviation Authority to the Scottish Office. And, in the context of the policies emerging from the forthcoming White Paper on science and technology, we will review the scope for transferring to the Scottish Office responsibility for schemes for encouraging industrial innovation.

These proposals represent a worthwhile integration of decision-making powers in the areas I have mentioned, with the other activities for which the Scottish Office already has responsibility.

I am also pleased to be able to confirm to the House that my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy at the Department of Trade and Industry is today announcing that his Department will open a major new oil and gas office in Aberdeen to serve the offshore industry.

I also wish to ensure that the Scottish Office is more visible in Scotland and more accessible to the general public. I propose to publish in future a concise and accessible annual report on the activities of the Scottish office and the non-departmental public bodies and next steps agencies for which I am responsible. The annual report may be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for scrutiny and debate.

Although my Department already has offices throughout Scotland, we shall seek opportunities for further dispersal within Scotland. This will apply both to parts of the Scottish Office and to non-departmental public bodies for which I am responsible. In addition, in accordance with the principles of the citizens charter, we shall establish a central inquiry unit accessible from all parts of Scotland for the cost of a local telephone call. This unit will be backed up by the designation of many of the existing departmental offices as Scottish Office information points. We shall examine the case for supplementing this facility with other information points in smaller towns around Scotland, operated on an agency basis.

The White Paper also sets out other plans I have to further the goal of the citizens charter by making my Department more responsive to the needs of the people of Scotland.

Last December, the leaders of the European Community met in Scotland for the successful Edinburgh summit that marked the climax of the United Kingdom's presidency of the Community. We will seek to hold further such events in Scotland in the future. In that context I am pleased to announce that the European Community will hold a Europartenariat conference of small businesses in Glasgow in December. Further details of this major event will be published shortly.

The partners of the Union need to work at bringing the reality of the Union alive for all the people of the United Kingdom. The White Paper outlines how Scotland's status as a nation within the Union can be more effectively recognised. The Union was and still is good for Scotland and good for the United Kingdom, but that does not mean that it cannot be made better; and we stand ready to consider other measures to this end which may emerge over time, to the benefit of all its partners.

The White Paper that I am publishing today does not mark the end of the taking stock process, but the start of a renewed emphasis by the Government on the importance to the United Kingdom of all its component parts. We will continue to seek further ways of strengthening the Union and Scotland's place in it.

We reject utterly the arguments of those who want Scotland to break away from the United Kingdom, either through the direct means of separation or by way of the slippery slope of a separate parliament. Our firm commitment is to the future integrity of the United Kingdom, secured through this House and this Parliament. The United Kingdom is a partnership of nations that has endured. We believe strongly that it is a partnership for good. In that spirit, I commend the White Paper to the House.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Does the Secretary of State not agree that his statement makes it plain once and for all that the Tories do not understand the Scottish people and never will? Does he accept that 11 months ago today the lion's roar from Scottish voters, who at the ballot boxes demanded a Scottish parliament, has been met with a weak, unworthy whimper and that he has squandered a unique opportunity?

The Scottish people wanted action on industry, on jobs and on keeping water in public hands. Is it not disgraceful and a complete repudiation of the assertion that the statement represents democracy that a few minutes ago the Prime Minister, almost by sleight of hand, said that water privatisation will be introduced in Scotland? That makes a mockery of the charade in which the Secretary of State claims to be involved. It is the complete opposite of democracy at work.

Above all, did not the Scottish people in April last year vote for home rule? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The response to that is not the acceptance of the overwhelming view of the Scottish people, but today's ludicrous statement containing sheer tokenism, talking shops and timid and tired policies. These conclusions to the stocktaking exercise surely make a laughing stock of the Prime Minister's pre-election promises in Scotland. Why is the party that complains about unaccountable bureaucracy in Europe now increasing unaccountable bureaucracy in Edinburgh? *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members are in good voice today, but I would appreciate it if they kept their voices to themselves in all parts of the House until I call them to speak. I hope that that is clearly understood.

Mr. Clarke: Despite the few laudable suggestions on training, industrial support schemes, Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd., the Arts Council and relocation policy, does the Secretary of State agree—if he ignores the ill-informed interruptions by people on the Conservative Benches who were not elected by the people of Scotland to decide on Scottish issues—that the real issue is not administrative but political devolution, and nowhere is that in the Government's policy?

For example, the Scottish Grand Committee proposal makes it clear that decisions will be taken not by those elected to deal with Scottish issues but by the House alone. Where is the political devolution there? Where is the sensitivity? I say to the Prime Minister, as he sits there sneering at Scottish views, that he ignores the views of the people of Scotland at his peril.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the solutions offered by the Government only make the democratic deficit worse? What is the point of increasing the power of the Scottish Office without in any way increasing its accountability to the Scottish people? More bureaucracy, but no democracy.

On information points and outposts, are we to look forward to more Tory lawyers and accountants in offices in the main street? The Government will say that that is on the French model, but I remind the Secretary of State that the French support real subsidiarity, real powers to the

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regions, the kind of powers that the right hon. Gentleman and the Prime Minister are denying to the people of Scotland.

Why is the Secretary of State ignoring the largest neglected group in Scotland—Scotland's women? There are no proposals concerning the Equal Opportunities Commission—no devolution there. The right hon. Gentleman talks in paragraph 9.4 about inspectors for social work, police and schools, but who guards the guards, and to whom are they accountable?

The Secretary of State tells us that the Government will consult much more openly on the appointment to public boards. Does that mean that they will rescind the decision on health boards and trusts—when they ignored the views of local communities and appointed Tory placemen and women?

Finally, how can the Secretary of State claim that his philosophy is strengthening the Union when he was prepared last night to make deals with parties whose philosophy is to break the Union? The House will be aware, despite the sneers on the Conservative Benches, of the "Dear Margaret—Yours sincerely, Ian" letter. Oh dear, oh dear.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the Scottish nationalists cannot claim that they are leading the opposition against the Conservative Government when they spend their time making private deals with the Conservative Government? Is it not the case that this week's events show that one can never trust the nationalists or the Tories and one can never trust the nationalists not to make deals with the Tories?

The truth is that this unrepresentative Chamber—in terms of Scottish affairs—ignores the simple fact that the Labour party does trust the Scottish people and the Scottish people trust the Labour party because they know that only the Labour party will deliver a Scottish parliament and real democracy to Scottish affairs.

Mr. Lang: That was not so much a sound bite as a sound nibble, and not a very sound one at that.

The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) calls for action, but if he sits down and reads the White Paper that I have published today, he will find no fewer than 50 specific commitments from the Government of value and importance to the future of Scotland within the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman will not recognise that Scotland can enjoy benefits from being within the United Kingdom, because he is so besotted with the idea of a separate Scottish parliament, which would inevitably lead to Scotland leaving the United Kingdom.

Wrapped up among the sound-bite rhetoric, I detected a quiet welcome for a number of our specific proposals. The hon. Gentleman knows that if he and his party and other Opposition parties reject the proposals, they need not happen—but the people of Scotland would be the poorer.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of a democratic deficit. The reality is that the proposals give Back Benchers on both sides of the House a better opportunity to pursue Scottish issues and initiatives, hold Ministers accountable, and protect the interests of their constituents.

The hon. Gentleman asked about water. There are no proposals in the White Paper affecting the future of water. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was right when he spoke about the advantages and benefits of privatisation. I have no doubt that privatisation, if we decide on that, will be better for the water industry, as for others.

As to voting for home rule, the hon. Gentleman keeps praying in aid the support of all those whom he says voted for home rule. The reality is that on the Opposition Benches one can find unionists, federalists, separatists, devolutionists, don't knows, and don't cares. That adds up to 75 per cent. of nothing.

The hon. Gentleman asked about health boards and health trusts, and complained that too many Conservatives and not enough socialists sit on them. The only complaint that I have read in the Scottish press was about there being too many socialists. When I wrote to the hon. Gentleman's party and to the other parties inviting nominations for those boards and those trusts, I received not one suggestion.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Gentleman must resume their seats.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): That was a lie.

Madam Speaker: Order. I shall be glad if the hon. Gentleman will withdraw that remark.

Mr. McKelvey: The Secretary of State is seeking to mislead the House, by making that statement.

Madam Speaker: Order. I asked the hon. Gentleman, who interrupted without being called, to withdraw his remark. I ask him to do that because—*[Interruption.]* Order. I need no help from below the Gangway. I ask the hon. Gentleman to do that because I hope that he will catch my eye later and be able to put his point. Will the hon. Gentleman withdraw his remark?

Mr. McKelvey: Of course, Madam Speaker. I withdraw it.

Madam Speaker: I am much obliged. That is all that we need.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke)——

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Madam Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State is answering the points made by a Member from the hon. Gentleman's own Front Bench.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Member for Monklands, West raised the question of an alleged deal between my party and the Scottish National party. I do not know whether the letter that the hon. Gentleman flourished was given to him by the Scottish National party, or whether he has been rummaging in the handbag of the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that I do not break a confidence—especially when a lady is involved.

Why should the hon. Gentleman complain about my party doing a deal with the Scottish National party when his party has been trying for weeks and weeks to do a deal with the Scottish National party? Sooner or later, Labour will have to choose—are they unionists or are they nationalists? They cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Is my right hon. Friend aware that those of us who were elected to represent Scotland's interest in the House are delighted with the White Paper's proposals? He and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister are to be congratulated on their understanding of what the Union really means to true Scots. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the cornerstone of this unitary Parliament is the right of right hon. and hon. Members to ask questions?

For many years, one of Opposition Members' main complaints has been that they have not had the opportunity to put more questions to Scottish Ministers. Surely they can only welcome the proposal for questions and Adjournment debates in the Scottish Grand Committee. If the new practices are to benefit the Union and Scotland. the participation of unionist Opposition Members will be required.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I am grateful for the welcome that he has given my proposals.

Of course it is important for Scottish Office Ministers to answer questions in the House every four weeks, as before, so that such questions can be asked by hon. Members representing every part of the United Kingdom. It is fair to say, however, that, as the Scottish Office has responsibilities for health, education, roads, industry, housing and a whole range of other matters—each of which is separately the subject of Question Time on the Floor of the House—Scottish Members should from time to time have an additional opportunity to pursue such matters further in the Scottish Grand Committee.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Secretary of State has managed to pull off the impossible by producing a feature film that is even more disappointing than its many trailers.

Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm that we have said in the past that we will support measures that will lead to improvement in the government of Scotland, and in the way in which we can discharge our duties to our constituents—including more Question Times, and the opportunity to question the Law Officers? Will he also confirm that evidence given to Special Standing Committees in regard to any Bill to privatise Scottish Water will be treated with more respect than the consultation responses that were dismissed and cast aside by the Prime Minister today, when he said that there "would be" privatisation of water in Scotland?

Notwithstanding all the PR hype and gimmicks that have been provided at the cost of a local telephone call, what are the realities of the right hon. Gentleman's statement? Is it not true that he has been unable to transfer fisheries responsibilities to Scotland; that, instead of a full petroleum engineering division, we have only a few jobs —welcome though they are;, that we are still slavishly following the English in regard to legal aid cuts; and that the Ministry of Defence has reversed its policies on jobs for Glasgow? Is not the statement summed up by the fact that, under the right hon. Gentleman's proposals, while we debate in Edinburgh we will still vote here in London?

Mr. Lang: Again, wrapped up in the rhetoric was a broad "thank you" for some of my proposals. I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman: alone among Opposition Members, he took the opportunity to come to me and put his suggestions. I took them into account when drawing up my proposals.

I have to tell the hon. Gentleman that the fisheries question was not on my agenda. The question of the Department of Trade and Industry office in Aberdeen has been dealt with by the full and welcome announcement of a considerable number of high-quality jobs: the number will increase as more oil companies transfer the relevant parts of their activities to Aberdeen. That will be of great value to the United Kingdom's offshore industry.

As for voting, it is true that power remains in the United Kingdom's Parliament. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that that should not be so, he should join the Scottish National party.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): First, give that Scottish education is under my right hon. Friend's command, may I plead for the immediate extinguishing of the new word "Europartenariat"? May I also ask him to remind the House that the strength of the Union, along with the variety of our systems of law, has enabled us to teach those who live south of the border—as 80 per cent. of the Scots who live in Britain do—how much better is our system of law? Those factors have allowed us to prevent many difficulties that have resulted in the release of people who were apparently properly convicted because of flaws in the law of England. Long may my right hon. Friend's proposals strengthen our law.

Mr. Lang: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right. Like him, I am not very happy with the Eurospeak word Europartenariat. Nevertheless, that will be an important conference of small businesses, many hundreds of which will come to Glasgow in December, thus creating major opportunities for United Kingdom businesses, particularly Scottish businesses, to exchange contacts and contracts, to their mutual advantage. My hon. and learned Friend is also absolutely right to draw attention to the differences between Scottish law and English law. That is precisely the kind of diversity that is accommodated within the United Kingdom and that results in the cross-fertilisation of each system, to the benefit of both.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. May I appeal, before calling any other hon. Member, for one question only? Many hon. Members want to put questions to the Secretary of State. Therefore, I should be obliged if one question only were put, briskly, so that we can make progress.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): How much will these extra summits cost? Will the cost be similar to the last one we had, which cost the Scottish taxpayer £16 million?

Mr. Lang: Two thirds of the cost of a Europartenariat is met by the European Community. I have no doubt at all that the benefits that will flow from such a conference will more than outweigh any other costs.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Is my right hon. Friend aware that all right-thinking Scots will welcome these well balanced, well thought out and constructive proposals? Does he accept that they will welcome the "Scottish Offices" set up throughout the land? Will he consider setting up one in Ayr?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend makes a very interesting and positive suggestion, to which I will give close consideration.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that the last time that such a response was given to so dire a situation, Nero played a fiddle? Now Ian Lang has played with a White Paper, to much the same effect. If he is so sure of the proposals that he has given us today, and if he thinks that the Scottish people want devolved bureaucracy, when what they want, in fact, is real democracy, why will he not put his proposals to a multi-option referendum?

Mr. Lang: There speaks an hon. Lady who is a member of a multi-option party. She is a member of Scotland United. I learned the other day that when the Labour party conference held a fringe meeting organised by Scotland United last autumn, there were five speakers on the platform and three in the audience, one of whom was the hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Galloway), so I do not think that Scotland United speaks for anybody.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the electors of Kincardine and Deeside will particularly welcome his commitment to strengthen the Union with the rest of the United Kingdom? They will also particularly welcome the news that the Department of Trade and Industry is to open a new oil and gas office in Aberdeen. May I ask my right hon. Friend to ensure that swift progress in setting up that office is made?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I can certainly assure him that all due speed will be used to ensure that that office is set up as quickly as possible. Initially, there will be 60 jobs, but that number will rise as industrial activity moves north.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What could Lord Sanderson have meant this morning when he said that the Government were contemplating changing the powers of local government? Has the Secretary of State told the Prime Minister, who is sitting next to him, that local government reform will cost at least £600 million extra?

Mr. Lang: Local government reform is not covered in my White Paper or statement, but, since the hon. Gentleman raises that question, all the estimates that we have seen will, far from adding to the costs of local government, reduce them.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the Union's greatest strengths is its dynamism and its constant ability to evolve and change in order to meet changing circumstances, new opportunities and different demands? Does he agree that the reforms that he has outlined today will set up the Union in fine style to meet the challenges of the new century, just as previous reforms enabled it to meet the specific and unique challenges of previous centuries, and that we can look forward to the 300th anniversary of the Union in 2007 with the Union in great shape?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who, of course, won a seat from the Labour party at the last general election and did it through his stout defence of the Union. This announcement today reinforces that defence of the Union.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): One of the difficulties that I have noticed in Edinburgh is that, when the Grand Committee meeting stops at 1 o'clock, very few Back Benchers have been given the opportunity to speak. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will bear that in mind.

As someone who is keen to ensure that the Union stays together, may I suggest that one of the things that the Secretary of State and the Government could do is to reduce unemployment and the despair that exists in many communities in Scotland? Where there is such despair, people become disillusioned with the present form of government and are then easy prey for the fanatics in the Scottish National party.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his thoughtful response to the proposals that I have announced. Unemployment is the kind of issue which could be fully debated in the Scottish Grand Committee.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I welcome my hon. Friend's sensible reform, but is it not high time to address the scandal of Scottish over-representation in the House? Is it not wholly undemocratic that Glasgow seats have only 30,000 or 40,000 constituents, whereas Cambridgeshire seats have 80,000 or 90,000?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome for my announcement. The number of seats in the House derives from the Act of Union, which guaranteed Scotland a certain number of seats. However, I entirely agree that it is high time that the boundary commissioners got down to work on the relative sizes of constituencies.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): If there is one thing that we can say with certainty on behalf of the people of Scotland, it is that, although the Secretary of State may have tried to placate the elected representatives in the House, he certainly has not satisfied the needs, demands and aspirations of the Scottish people. There is nothing about greater accountability in the proposals for Committees to meet in Edinburgh for extended periods and question times. When the Secretary of State addresses the question of accountability, and stops dealing with people who, on the day on which he tries to deal with them, talk about civil disobedience, the people of Scotland may start believing in him.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman and I will have to disagree. If he believes that any Scottish Committee should be accountable to a body outside the House, I believe that he is wrong. I believe that the integrity of the United Kingdom Parliament is central to the future well-being of Scotland and of the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Will my right hon. Friend accept a warm welcome for his proposals, which keep the integrity of the Union, and can he assure us that, in consequence, we who represent the much larger population of the south-east of England will no longer be constantly elbowed out of debating time by the disproportionate number of Scots who pontificate on our affairs?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I believe that my proposals show the capacity of the United Kingdom Parliament to accommodate the diversity of the different component parts of the union.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Why does the Secretary of State not have the courage of his convictions

and put his proposals and the White Paper to the test with a multi-option referendum, along the lines of the Bill that I shall present to the House later this afternoon? The other option would be a Scottish parliament, whose exact powers would be decided by the people of Scotland, most of whom are fed up with the treachery and skulduggery of that parcel of rogues on the Government Bench.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman represents a party which one might call a multi-option party. It was the general secretary of the Labour party, Mr. Larry Whitty, who described a multi-option referendum as "a fairly ludicrous suggestion".

Madam Speaker: Sir Teddy Taylor. [HON. MEMBERS: "He has only just come in."] Order. I saw precisely when the hon. Gentleman came into the Chamber.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I welcome the modest but useful proposals. Is the Secretary of State aware of the huge admiration among supporters of the union for the guts and courage that he has shown in consistently resisting the divisive and costly devolution proposals, especially as he was standing in a marginal constituency and the whole of the Scottish press told him that he would have to change his mind to survive? He has shown the kind of courage that we should be proud to see in a Conservative Government and in this Parliament.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and I well remember the fine example he set when he was the Member of Parliament for Cathcart.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Is the Secretary of State—*[Interruption.]* I do not need instruction, Madam Speaker, from the party that tried to sell out Scotland's water campaign. Is the Secretary of State seriously telling the House that he and the Prime Minister have laboured for a year to produce this constitutional charade? Does he not understand that what is wrong with the Grand Committee is not the number of meetings it holds, but the fact that it does not have the power to decide anything? Does he not understand that what is wrong with the Scottish Office is not the number of functions he has, but the fact that he is in charge of it without a democratic mandate from the Scottish people? Does he really believe that 50 propaganda offices around Scotland, peddling policies like the privatisation of Scotland's water, will endear the Scottish people to his bankrupt Union?

Mr. Lang: First, may I say how glad I was to see the hon. Gentleman in the Government Lobby last night? I am, however, grateful to him for not welcoming my announcement. I should have been deeply worried if he had welcomed it. The hon. Gentleman talks about a democratic mandate, but I remember that not so long ago he was shouting, "Scotland free by 93." Then he went to a general election, his representation in this House went down by 40 per cent. and his party now has three seats.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): My right hon. Friend will know that some of us have watched our party struggle for more than 20 years with the problem of coming to terms with the situation. Is he aware that those of us who were not attracted by Lady Thatcher's regime will find his proposals a move back in the direction of compromise, towards trying to satisfy the aspirations of the Scottish people? Does he agree that this afternoon we have really seen the continuing battle between the Labour party and the Scottish National party for the soul of the Scottish electorate which, as far as those on the Opposition Benches are concerned, seems only to be represented by a minority of the people of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome, but I would not wish him to think that the package represents a compromise. It represents a firm commitment to the integrity of the United Kingdom, and we shall not budge one inch down the slippery slope towards devolution. With the package I believe that we can show that Union need not mean uniformity and that the United Kingdom Parliament can adapt its procedures to suit the needs of all its component parts.

Mr. George Galloway (Glasgow, Hillhead): They might be dancing in the streets of Raith this evening at the news, but certainly not anywhere else. The proposals will be treated with derision and disgust by the majority of the Scottish people, including a considerable number of Scottish Conservatives, according to a poll in *The Scotsman* this morning. Scotland deserves better than that —better than the ridiculous raft of proposals and better than the shabby, squalid manoeuvrings of the Scottish National party or the culture of political sectarianism that exists elsewhere. Why will not the Secretary of State answer the question put by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley, North (Mrs. Adams)? Why will he not have the legendary courage that his hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) referred to a few minutes ago? Why will he not put the proposals to the Scottish people in a multi-choice referendum?

Mr. Lang: I read in the newspapers today a poll that indicated strong support for the type of approach in our White Paper. I know that the hon. Gentleman thinks that a lot of people in Scotland want what he calls home rule. I am indebted to his hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), speaking with all the authority of the shadow Chancellor, who said last week:

> "I think we are making a mistake if we just assume somehow there is huge enthusiasm for home rule in Scotland".

The hon. Gentleman asked for a multi-option referendum, but we had one on 9 April last year and it returned a Conservative Government.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Does my right hon. Friend realise that English Members are used to special treatment being given to Scotland and to Scottish Members in this House? He referred to the Act of Union and to the gross over-representaiton of Scottish Members here—20 per cent. more than is appropriate for English Members of Parliament. As we hear so much about democracy from Members on the Opposition Benches, would he increase the number of English Members by 100 so that there is a balance?

Mr. Lang: Decisions of that kind should be made by the House. But the House has continued to take the view that the treaty of Union should be honoured. That is the reason for the present representation.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): The Secretary of State will not be surprised that right hon. and hon. Members on the Ulster Unionist Bench give a wholehearted welcome to this measure to strengthen the Union, especially as many families in Northern Ireland trace their roots to mother Scotland. At the end of the

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White Paper the Secretary of State enunciates two principles—that the Government will continue to seek further ways of strengthening the Union and Scotland's place in it; and that they utterly reject the arguments of those who want Scotland to break away from the United Kingdom, either through direct means of separation or by way of the slippery slope of a separate parliament.

Can the Secretary of State confirm that those two principles are supported by all his Cabinet colleagues? If so, will he direct the attention of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to them and remind his right hon. and learned Friend that an even greater proportion of people in Northern Ireland vote for the Union than is the case in Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for hs welcome for the statements in my White Paper. He will appreciate that, as I am a territorial Minister, my responsibilities relate to Scotland, and my statement today is clearly directed towards Scotland. However, I can reassure the right hon. Gentleman, as the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland did the other day, that the Government remain committed to the unity of the United Kingdom, as it affects Northern Ireland, so long as a majority of the people of Northern Ireland support it.

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I thank my right hon. Friend for doing nothing to undermine the key role that Scotland plays in the United Kingdom. Does he agree that Scotland and England have much to learn from each other? For example, England could learn lessons from the Scottish legal system, while Scotland could learn lessons from England's highly successful introduction of grant-maintained schools and water privatisation.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support and for his confirmation of my expressed view that union need not mean uniformity.

Mr. Norman Hogg: (Cumbernauld and Kilsyth): I should like to give a warm welcome to the Secretary of State's statement that the Europartenariat exhibition is to come to Scotland and to compliment the Minister for Industry, who, in Thessalonika last June, worked hard to that end. The exhibition will bring jobs to Scotland.

However, I must ask the Secretary of State for an undertaking that if there are to be any inter-party discussions about his proposals and about changes in our Standing Orders he will refrain from taking part in any shabby negotiations with minority parties and other hole-in-the wall organisations, which have discredited him in the past 24 hours. I make that point in the hope that we shall get back to doing things properly, and away from arrangements such as those that so discredited the Government last night.

Mr. Lang: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's support for the decision to hold the Europartenariat in Glasgow in December. It does indeed flow from the visit of the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Minister for Industry, who has been working so hard to secure this outcome for Scotland.

Consultations regarding the amendment of Standing Orders will be conducted through the usual channels and in the usual way. The hon. Gentleman is a former deputy Chief Whip, and I myself am a former Whip, so neither of us is an amateur in these matters.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I am sure that the taxpayers of Scotland will be very grateful that my right hon. Friend did not take the route towards having tax-raising powers in Scotland. I wonder whether he could move towards a system fairer to Scottish Members and taxpayers. I refer to the fact that the spending powers of his Department should be proportionate to those of the English and Welsh Departments. We ought not to have a situation in which a disproportionate amount of taxpayers' money is spent in any part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The approach that the Government take in these matters is to secure a comparable level of service in all parts of the United Kingdom. Given the varying circumstances within the United Kingdom, it is inevitable that more resources are directed to some areas, be they Merseyside, East Anglia or the central belt of Scotland, than to others. I am sure that my hon. Friend agrees that the important thing is to try to achieve a uniform standard of service, as far as possible. The formula for distributing resources to achieve that is reviewed regularly.

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): Is the Secretary of State aware that, in reality, his statement changes nothing in Scotland? The Scottish people remain as before, wholly at the mercy of a Tory majority in the House which they did not elect. Does he not understand that, despite the parliamentary cretinism shown by some on the Opposition Benches last night, he cannot count on continuing disarray and disunity on these Benches to see him safely through to the next general election? The Scottish people are beginning to understand that if the fight against Tory policies, the fight for socialist change and the fight for Scottish self-determination is ever to be won, it will not be won in the House but through mass extra-parliamentary action by the Scottish people back in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: Promises, promises. What is clear from the hon. Gentleman's intervention is that he has no right to claim to speak for the people of Scotland, any more than have the Scottish National party or the Liberal Democrats. We stood for election to a United Kingdom Parliament in April last year and the Conservative and Unionist party won that election.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that he is extending the number and use of forums where Scottish questions can be asked and debated without the presence of hon. Members representing England, Wales and Ireland? If that is to be the case, will he ensure, as a member of the Cabinet, that when matters concerning England, Ireland and Wales are debated in the House, Scottish Members will not be present? Otherwise, we shall have a constitutional problem.

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend will be familiar with the experience that Scottish Members can have from time to time when they seek to intervene in health or environment questions on the Floor of the House only to be told by the Minister that they are matters for which the Scottish Office is answerable. This is something which cuts both ways. It

is important in this Parliament that we arrange the mechanisms for delivering government to ensure that the varying and diverse interests of different parts of the United Kingdom are fully accommodated. That is what I am trying to achieve.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The Secretary of State trumpets that the White Paper and his statement address the real problem of open government and giving information. Why, then, did he choose today of all days to smuggle through the House, by a planted question from one of his hon. Friends, the announcement about the petroleum engineering directorate? Does he not realise that it is not a matter of information being given that is at the root of the problem, but the Government's total insensitivity to the problems facing the people of Scotland? If he really wants to strengthen the Union he must begin from the ground up, by strengthening local government, rather than weakening it and by taking on the Scottish nationalists and not getting into bed with them. Above all else, he must stop pandering to them with some of the nonsense that he has in the White Paper.

Mr. Lang: Far from trying to smuggle in the oil jobs, I am delighted to be able to proclaim that announcement, as I have done today. My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy is in Aberdeen holding a press conference to announce the precise details. I hope the hon. Gentleman can find it in his heart, as a Member representing Aberdeen, to welcome the announcement, which is of great value to his constituents.

Of course we are keen to reform and strengthen local government and we will bring forward proposals on that. As to relations with the Scottish National party, I hope that those on the hon. Member's Front Bench are listening to what he said.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the people of Scotland have always wanted more say over their own affairs? There is only one party that is willing to give parents more say over the education of their children, council house tenants more say in the running of their estates and taxpayers more say in the spending of their own income. Is it not paradoxical that those who call for a multi-option referendum today were, on 9 April, promising constitutional change without a referendum?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I could not put it better.

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): We have heard much from the whingeing English about the preferential treatment given to the Scots. Could I ask the Secretary of State why preferential treatment, or even-handed treatment, was not given to the Scots two weeks ago when a statutory instrument went through the House on the opening of betting shops in Scotland? The Government side of that Committee was nine Anglos and a Scottish Minister. Not one member of the Back-Bench committee for Scotland was allowed on it.

Mr. Lang: That is a matter for the Selection Committee and I am sure that it will note the hon. Gentleman's point, with which I have some sympathy.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that his reaffirmation of the fundamental importance of the Union will be widely welcomed in Wales?

Mr. Lang: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend and I am sure that the interests of Wales will also be taken into account in considering these matters further.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Does the Secretary of State not appreciate that this is not going to be taken as much of a stocktaking for a nation which has voted consistently and overwhelmingly for the establishment of its own parliament within the United Kingdom? Does he appreciate that the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) had it wrong when he said that the most important right that we have in Parliament is the right to ask questions? The most important right that we have in Parliament is to vote and if these reforms are serious surely the right hon. Gentleman should have the courage to submit any legislation on the future of the water industry in Scotland to a vote in the Scottish Grand Committee, elected by the people of Scotland?

Mr. Lang: I am glad that the hon. Member recognises the importance of the vote in our democratic system. I will do nothing to diminish the importance of the vote; nor will I do anything to diminish or dissipate the power of that vote here in the House of Commons, where it matters most.

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for Scotland for reminding us that the quisling SNP has been reduced to "three in 93". May I suggest that it might be reduced to "none in 2001". That might be appropriate. On the question of partnership, I cannot agree with the Secretary of State. I wonder if he might address this. This is not a partnership that he is talking about but an unequal and unrepresentative fix that he is attempting to obtain. I share his concern—and I hope that he sees that—for the Union. I wish to see the continuing Union of the United Kingdom, but I am concerned that the present set-up may diminish it and make it an even more devalued arrangement.

In terms of accountability, I am glad that the Secretary of State said that he would not reduce the power of the vote. May I ask him to put together a Scottish Grand Committee that reflects the voting power of the people of Scotland and then allow the legislation that he and I discussed to be judged by a representative committee that reflects the people's voting pattern in Scotland? That is why people will reject this. Does he not realise that, so long as he uses his English colleagues' Tory majority——

Madam Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Connarty: I am asking a question. Does he not realise that he will never get the credibility of the Scottish people for what he is trying to sell?

Mr. Lang: I hope that the hon. Member is wrong about the SNP having no representatives in 2001. I hope that we shall achieve that result long before that time. The route that the hon. Member is suggesting for the Scottish Grand Committee would mean either that some Members of Parliament, notably from his own party, would have to be disqualified from the Scottish Grand Committee or that English Back Benchers would have to be brought in. We had English Back Benchers on the Committee in the past,

[Mr. Lang]

and the Labour party was against that. For some incomprehensible reason, those of my hon. Friends who served on the Scottish Grand Committee were no longer keen to remain on it, so we now have all Scottish MPs on the Scottish Grand Committee, and I think that that is generally recognised as sensible.

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The Secretary of State can wriggle all he likes, but the whole House heard the Prime Minister commit Scotland's water to be privatised. Does that careless and casual announcement by the Prime Minister not indicate his contempt, not only for the Secretary of State for Scotland, but for the Scottish people?

Mr. Lang: I heard what my right hon. Friend said and the hon. Gentleman heard what he said and he did not give the commitment that the hon. Gentleman indicates. He certainly spoke of the strength, the value and the qualities of privatisation and that is demonstrated by a large number of privatisations that have taken place in the past. it is not, however, part of my statement today.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): It is a fact that a disproportionate amount of taxpayers' money, taking the United Kingdom as a whole, is spent in Scotland, as, indeed, it is in Northern Ireland and in Wales. It is part of the price which I gladly pay for maintaining the Union. We should not fail to recognise the special needs of Scotland in that respect. I would suggest one item of public expenditure that should be given to a public body in Scotland to bring it up to the standards of England. I refer of course to the Scottish Rugby Union.

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, despite the barb in the tail of his question. The fact is that, in a sense, England is playing at home in this Parliament; and as my hon. Friend will know and as Twickenham demonstrated, that gives some advantages.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): If the Secretary of State does not already know it, he will soon be aware that his proposals will be greeted with universal contempt throughout Scotland. They amount to a tawdry little collection of half measures and non-events; they mean nothing to the people of Scotland, and will give them no more say over their own affairs, which is what they clearly voted for in the general election last year.

If the right hon. Gentleman does not have the confidence in his views to put these matters to a referendum, will he at least allow a full debate in the House on the matters, to ensure that the points that the Scottish people sent us here to make are clearly put across to him in a way that there has been a failure to do hitherto? We want a Scottish parliament: we will settle for nothing less.

Mr. Lang: The suitability of the changes that I have proposed today will be shown by whether the hon. Gentleman's party takes advantage of them in due course. Debates are not a matter for me, but Standing Orders will have to be amended and the subject will be debated at that time.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): On the transfer of Highlands and Islands Airport Ltd. to the Scottish Office: will the Secretary of State give a guarantee to the employees of that company that there will be no reduction in their pay and conditions or in the quality of their pension plans? A number of the employees are worried about that and would be grateful if the right hon. Gentleman would give them a categorical guarantee now.

Mr. Lang: We have no plans to make any changes in that respect.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Will the Secretary of State agree that an occasion such as this prompts the thought among many that we enjoy exceedingly good fortune, in that the secessionist movement in Scotland is so honourably eminent but so poorly represented in this place—by this lot? Will he at least concede that there is a widespread belief in Scotland that we live in a highly centralised multinational state, which is more and more firmly embedded in an over-centralised European union? Why not settle the argument among federalists, unionists and separatists by holding a referendum?

Mr. Lang: We see the best way of resisting centralisation as devolving power to the people. That is what we are seeking to do by setting up local enterprise companies and hospital trusts, by privatisation, by council house ownership, by reducing taxation and by a range of other means—developing the citizens charter, which permeates many of the ideas in the White Paper, for instance.

Mr. Tom Clarke: I thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing a comprehensive series of questions—that certainly goes for our side—on the vague statement that the Secretary of State has made.

The right hon. Gentleman has removed confusion and introduced confusion. He removed it by publicly thanking the hon. Member for Banff and Buchanan (Mr. Salmond) and the SNP for supporting the Government in the Lobbies last night, so no one is in any doubt about what took place then. He introduced confusion by appearing to be in conflict with the Prime Minister on the issue of water privatisation. The Prime Minister's statement was quite clear; what is not clear is whether the Secretary of State's consultation is a charade. The House must return to that important matter before too long.

This document, for which we have had to wait 11 months, offers little to the people of Scotland. It offers no real democracy; it offers devolution of power but not responsibility or accountability to the people of Scotland. It falls far short of the clearly expressed views of the Scottish people as recorded in April of last year.

The Government have ignored the opinions of the Scottish people. It is interesting that the document was published in a blue cover, the colour of the Tory party, whose supporters amount to a small minority of the people of Scotland—a minority becoming smaller still because of the Government's attitude. They have rejected the real democracy to which the Scottish people are committed but the Government clearly are not.

Mr. Lang: I think that the hon. Gentleman's initial response showed that he agrees with and supports quite a number of these proposals. He talks of conflict. If he is looking for conflict, he should look to the views of his hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), who has said, as quoted in the *Courier* last December:

"I acknowledge there are too many Scots still sceptical of the value of a Scottish Parliament in bringing better government".

That clearly differs from the hon. Gentleman's view.

The colour of the White Paper is the blue of Scotland—*[Interruption.]*—the blue of Scotland in the Union. I believe that the presence of Scotland in the Union is a partnership for good.

Mr. Tom Clarke: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The Scottish people who will have been following our proceedings this afternoon must be greatly concerned about the Government's thinking on water privatisation. We heard earlier from the Prime Minister that water privatisation would be good for Scotland and would be beneficial for the people of Scotland, as it has been for the people south of the border. When the Secretary of State was questioned, he appeared to suggest that his consultation exercise was still continuing.

The people of Scotland are aware that water is of the utmost importance to them, as it is to every individual and family in the land. They are entitled to have the matter clarified, but it must be clarified quickly, now or this evening. I ask you, Madam Speaker, whether, in the light of the confusion and differences in pronouncements between the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, the people of Scotland will receive the clear statement on that important issue to which they are entitled.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must deal with one point of order at a time.

It seems to me that the hon. Member is attempting to pursue a policy matter on which the Chair cannot pronounce. His remarks will have been heard by the occupants of the Government Front Bench. [HON. MEMBERS: "On a point of order, Madam Speaker."] One at a time, please.

Mr. Bill Walker: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that meetings of Standing Committees of the House studying legislation upstairs—I am thinking particularly of statutory instruments—may be attended by any hon. Member? Will you further confirm that the comments made earlier by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) were wrong and out of order? I attended the Committee about which he was speaking, using the rules of the House to do so, which demonstrates how well Scots rules are covered in this place.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members must allow me to answer one point of order at a time.

Mr. Robert Hughes: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. When responding to a question from me, the Secretary of State suggested that I might like to welcome the fact that some jobs would be going to Aberdeen. I am not in a position to say yea or nay, since the relevant information is not available to me, although apparently it is to be made available by way of a planted question.

There is no point the Secretary of State referring to the opening of a new Department of Trade and Industry petroleum office when hon. Members have no idea what that is all about and are unable to question him about it. It is nonsense to refer to better communications when the Secretary of State behaves in that manner.

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair. If it is a point for the Secretary of State, the hon. Member must find other means of pursuing it.

Mr. Kynoch: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance. Is it an abuse of the House that copies of the White Paper, which appear to have been given to occupants of the Opposition Front Bench prior to the statement being made, should have been photocopied and given to Opposition Back Benchers—*[Interruption.]*—and were clearly visible while my right hon. Friend was making his statement?

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me.

Several hon. Members: On a point of order.

Madam Speaker: Just a moment, please. I can hear quite well.

Mr. McAllion: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The next business on the Order Paper is the presentation of a Bill by my hon.Friend the Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) designed

"to provide for the holding of a referendum on the establishment of a Scottish Parliament."

Given the hostility that was shown this afternoon by Opposition Members to the Secretary of State's announcement, do you agree that we should not waste any further time on Maastricht but instead should give over the whole of tomorrow to debating the question of holding a Scottish referendum, which seems the only way——

Madam Speaker: Order. Perhaps we should waste no more time on points of order, but let the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan) introduce his Bill.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. There are 11 Scottish Conservative Members and, on the basis of the questions that were asked following the statement, no fewer than five Conservative Back Benchers had the opportunity to ask questions. It is no criticism of you, Madam Speaker—I am aware that other hon. Members were not selected to put questions—but is it a reasonable balance on Scottish issues that virtually every Conservative Back Bencher should have an opportunity to ask a question, whereas a party with nine Members gets only one? May I ask for your consideration to achieve a more even balance in future?

Madam Speaker: I cannot take that any further without other opportunities for debate. The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I deal as fairly and justly as I can with the entire House.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You know the considerable interest that all Members of the United Kingdom Parliament take in the important statement that we have just heard. I appreciate that you allowed the period for questions to run on for some time and tried to encourage Members to ask just one concise question. I therefore have to ask whether it is in order to allow a Front-Bench spokesman to ramble on at length and be called twice on the same statement.

Madam Speaker: It is not for me to determine whether hon. Members ramble on or get directly to the point.

[Madam Speaker]

[HON. MEMBERS: "On a point of order, Madam Speaker".] Order. Just a moment, I have not finished yet; show me some courtesy. I am courteous to the House; please be courteous to the Speaker of the House. It is in order for the Front-Bench spokesman to come back for two or three minutes, and that is often allowed.

Mr. Adam Ingram (East Kilbride): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I draw your attention to the remarks made by the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) in today's *Scotsman*, where he says that his party has drawn up plans to blow up water pipes. Is there any action that you can take to encourage that party and that hon. Member to desist from the language of terrorism?

Madam Speaker: That is not a point of order for me.

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Further to the point of order of the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), Madam Speaker. As you have a justifiably high reputation for defending the interests of Back Benchers, and given that both Ministers and shadow Ministers are for a majority of the time at the Dispatch Box when they wish to be—[HON. MEMBERS: "Where were you?"]—I was in the Chamber listening to the statement. Madam Speaker, whether or not it is in the rules, is it fair, when a number of hon. Members want to ask questions that are particularly important to them and their constituents, for shadow Secretaries of State to take up Back Benchers' time by asking two sets of questions on the same statement, whether it be today or at any other time?

Madam Speaker: Unless the House wishes to change what has been our custom, that will continue.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member for East Kilbride (Mr. Ingram), who mentioned me, did not have the courtesy to tell me that he would be doing so. You need not worry about making any such statement as he suggested, because the SNP would not be involved in any such activities as blowing up pipelines, or anything of that kind. All I can assure you is that I may well be going to night classes to learn plumbing.

Madam Speaker: That is interesting. I have a number of jobs at home, and I shall send a handwritten note to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Brian Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): The Secretary of State made reference in his statement to the fact that no nominations had been received from any Labour representative for the health boards or NHS trusts. That is wrong, and the right hon. Gentleman seriously misled the House.

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw what he has just said. As I understood it, the hon. Member is making an accusation against the Secretary of State that he seriously misled the House. Have I misunderstood? *[Interruption.]* Order. Let me deal with the hon. Gentleman. Is the hon. Gentleman making an accusation that the Secretary of State seriously misled the House?

Mr. Donohoe: Inadvertently, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Lang: It may be for the convenience of the House if I make it clear that I was referring to communications that I sent to the leader of each party on the Opposition Benches. It may well be that individual Members have made individual submissions to my Department which I have not seen. I was referring to the party approaches.

Madam Speaker: I am very pleased to have that cleared up. Perhaps we can now make some progress.

BILL PRESENTED

REFERENDUM (SCOTLAND)

Mr. Dennis Canavan, supported by Mr. Tom Clarke, Mr. Jimmy Wray, Dr. Norman A. Godman, Mr. David Marshall, Mr. William McKelvey, Mr. John McAllion, Mr. George Galloway, Mrs. Irene Adams, Mr. Eric Clarke, Mr. Brian H. Donohoe and Mr. Jimmy Hood, presented a Bill to provide for the holding of a referendum on the establishment of a Scottish Parliament: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed. [Bill 153.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

CHESSINGTON COMPUTER CENTRE

That the draft Chessington Computer Centre Trading Fund Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK

That the draft Asian Development Bank (Fifth Replenishment of the Asian Development Fund and Second Regularised Replenishment of the Technical Assistance Special Fund) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION

That the draft International Finance Corporation (1991 General Capital Increase) Order 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

PNEUMOCONIOSIS (WORKERS' COMPENSATION)

That the draft Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

CHILD SUPPORT

That the draft Child Support (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

CHILD BENEFIT

That the draft Child Benefit and Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. David Davis.]*

Question agreed to.

House Purchase (Simplification)

4.44 pm

Mrs. Teresa Gorman (Billericay): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to introduce new procedures for the conveyancing of freehold residential property; and for connected purposes.

The purpose of this Bill is to simplify house purchasing. It would introduce new procedures for the conveyancing of freehold residential property and for connected purposes.

During the summer recess, I was fortunate enough to visit Australia with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, which is an admirable organisation for the exchange of ideas between people in the Commonwealth. There I came across a scheme which takes the horror out of house buying. It is so simple that one wonders why nobody thought of it before. It was brought to my attention by a number of British people who have settled in Australia and bought a house there after previously having had experience of the trauma that people in this country go through when they buy a house. It is as simple as buying a new or second-hand car—or a yacht, if one had that kind of money. It is a kind of one-stop shopping for a house.

Under this arrangement, people who are looking for a house first of all make up their minds how much money they can afford. If they are going to borrow money, they find that out before they go looking. They then set out to find a house, through an agent, or privately, or through a building society. Having found their house, they get it checked out, if they so wish, before there is any commitment on their part or on the part of the vendor. They then go back to the agent, if they are buying through an agent, and complete a very simple form. The form is designed by the Real Estate Institute of Western Australia, is approved by the Government and is legally binding. It is a contract for the sale of land or a house by offer and acceptance.

Once people have decided on the house they want and the money they have, and are happy about the terms and the condition of the house, they make their offer and sign the form. If the vendor agrees, he or she signs the form. There is now a legally binding commitment, and there is no need for any other kind of rigmarole. The form includes the agreed date on which the transaction will take place, the settlement date. There is no need to pay a deposit; there is no need to get a solicitor, a conveyancer or anyone else involved. A contract has been made between two consenting adults, and it is binding. As I have said, this scheme is not only approved by estate agents and building societies in Australia, but endorsed by the Government.

The advantages of this scheme over the system that we have in this country are very many. To begin with, it cuts out the chains in which many people have half agreed to buy a house and then, later on, begin to change their minds and try to raise or lower the price by gazumping, or whatever the oppposite is—it is not gazundering, but it is something like that. That cannot be done, because once people have decided on a house they are committed, so long as the vendor agrees the price. It is not possible to change one's mind at a later date. People have to make up their mind and stick to it.

Having decided on the date on which the contract will be completed, that is also a commitment. The purchase time cannot be stretched out while the buyer or vendor looks round for something else. It is a commitment, and the parties involved must go through with it.

It also cuts out the practice of people making bogus offers for houses. Apparently, some people look at and make offers for a number of houses, hoping that the vendor of one of them will perhaps lower his price. But all the other people to whom they have made offers are then disappointed, and may find that that affects their own house purchase arrangements. This scheme cuts that out, because once people have made an offer, they sign the form. If the vendors accept it, that is it. Buyers cannot go around committing themselves to half a dozen people and then letting them down.

The Bill would remove most of the haggling after an offer has been made. Almost everyone who has sold or is trying to sell a house knows the awful feeling when, having agreed a price through a solicitor or privately, the buyer comes back to say that he has changed his mind, that he cannot raise the money, or that there is something wrong with the drains and he wants a reduction. The commitment has to be made by the buyer; once the form is signed, that is it.

The Bill would take most of the angst out of buying a house. It would make it as simple as buying a second-hand car. Buyers would make their bids in the knowledge that they could not wriggle out of the deal.

The scheme is not dissimilar from that in Scotland, which is excellent. It involves people making bids in a form of auction. Until the bids are opened and the highest bidder is discovered, no one knows who will get the house. I believe that my proposal is a little better than the Scottish scheme.

Most people have horror stories about trying to buy houses; if they have not had a bad experience themselves, they know of friends or relations who have. The scheme will take the horror out of house buying. The scheme is so simple that one wonders why nobody thought of it before. There is no reason why we should not adopt it in this country. The proposed scheme would need the sanction of Government. I wish to introduce the Bill because contracts have to be legally binding on both parties.

I seek leave to introduce the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mrs. Teresa Gorman, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. John Bowis, Mr. Barry Field, Mr. Bernard Jenkin, Mr. Simon Burns and Mr. David Evennett.

HOUSE PURCHASE (SIMPLIFICATION)

Mrs. Teresa Gorman accordingly presented a Bill to introduce new procedures for the conveyancing of freehold residential property; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 26 March, and to be printed. [Bill 154.]

Orders of the Day

OPPOSITION DAY

[10TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Manufacturing Industry and Unemployment

4.52 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House notes that, since the present Prime Minister took office manufacturing output has fallen, manufacturing investment has fallen and manufacturing employment has fallen; recalls that, in every year until Her Majesty's Government took office Britain ran a surplus in manufactured trade and that for each of the last 10 years Britain has registered a deficit in manufactured trade; records its concern that, since 1979 Britain has lost 2·75 million jobs in manufacturing, leading to the present unacceptable level of mass unemployment; condemns the policies which have resulted in over nine million citizens experiencing unemployment since the present Prime Minister took office; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to introduce measures to stimulate investment in technology and training to produce a coherent strategy for industry, and to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I have to announce that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister, and has put a 10-minute limit on speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm.

Mr. Cook: Last week, the Prime Minister seized the attention of the nation with his declaration:

"I passionately believe that we need an expanding industrial base."

Many of us would have regarded the need for an expanding industrial base as a self-evident proposition. What made the declaration arrest the attention of the nation was that the industrial base of Britain has been contracting ever since the Prime Minister became a Member of Parliament.

Since the Prime Minister entered the House in 1979, manufacturing's share of GDP has fallen faster in this country than it has in other nations. It has fallen three times faster than in Germany, and 12 times faster than in Japan. Manufacturing output has been virtually static over the same period, in which the right hon. Gentleman, with his passionate beliefs, supported, and even led, a Conservative Government. Manufacturing in Britain has grown more slowly since 1979 than in five of the six other members of G7, and in 18 of the 21 other members of the OECD.

Last week, when the interviewer reminded the Prime Minister that we used to be told that all this did not matter, and that, when the last engineer locked the last factory, the service sector would be there to keep us all in employment, the Prime Minister replied:

"I didn't agree with it. I was a minority view."

I have to report to the House that I have searched for where that minority view was expressed by the Prime Minister. His view was not just a minority view: it was a persecuted and suppressed view, that was forced to stay underground for fear of being quashed. Nowhere do we find it expressed before last week.

The word "manufacturing" did not even cross the Prime Minister's lips in the two Budget speeches which he made as Chief Secretary. There were no measures for manufacturing, and no mention of manufacturing, in the Budget which he presented as Chancellor. There was no mention of it in the Queen's Speech last year, or in the Prime Minister's speech in that debate. Nor was there any mention of manufacturing as recently as last year, in the Prime Minister's speech to the Tory party conference, although he found time for a novel cadenza on the theme that the road to recovery is lined with motorway service toilets.

I have not found any expression of a minority view. It is always possible that a Nationalist Member might have, at the back of a filing cabinet, a handwritten note signed "John", telling him or her that the demands for manufacturing industry are reasonable and that he will do all he can to deliver them, but the rest of us who do not do secret deals with Tory Governments do not know about it.

We know about the views of the President of the Board of Trade. He voiced a minority view in the 1980s. He wrote whole books in which he expressed trenchant, powerful views on the importance of manufacturing, on the need for intervention and on the case for a powerful Department of Trade and Industry. When a journalist put one of those passages to him last autumn, he replied:

"You've been reading all those books I wrote when I was on the Back Benches. You mustn't believe what a Back Bencher says."

It is a close-run thing, but I must say to the President that, if I have to choose between believing a Government Back Bencher or a Minister, I give the balance of advantage to the Back Bencher.

One can tell how far the President's views on manufacturing have declined since those books. One can tell how they have been marginalised since he joined the Government again. One can tell it in the evidence before the House in the amendment tabled in the President's name, which does not list one programme to support industry, one industry which the Government have saved or one project which they have launched in civil research.

The amendment reads as if it was drafted in the Treasury. It might as well have been, because there is not a single measure in it which has been taken by the DTI. It contains the hallmark of this Treasury of Micawbers. It contains the 57th sighting of recovery over the horizon. I am not clear why the Government now need to promise a recovery for industry. A couple of months ago, the Chancellor produced a report on manufacturing industry in which he told us that recovery had already taken place, and that what had happened to manufacturing industry was the success story of the Government. That prompted the director general of the CBI to write:

"If the Government really believes that all is for the best in British manufacturing while we run an alarming trade deficit in the depths of recession, we have a problem. What else might they believe? That public spending is under control?"

The amendment tells us that the Government have set the framework for recovery. Do they ever look at what has happened to manufacturing investment over the time that they have been in office? In not one single year since 1979 has manufacturing investment reached the level it was at in 1979 as a percentage of GNP. If manufacturing investment had stayed at that level throughout the past 13 years, we would have had £34,000 million invested in new machines, in new technology and in modern factories. That is the damage that their policies have done to the industrial base of the country.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley) *rose*——

Mr. Cook: I do not know whether to believe the hon. Gentleman as a Back Bencher, but I will give way to him.

Mr. Oppenheim: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his customary courtesy in giving way. Bearing in mind the fact that he seems to think that the decline in manufacturing, as he wrongly puts it, started in 1979, is he aware that, between 1974 and 1979, Britain lost no fewer than 735,000 jobs in manufacturing—the worst record in the industrial world with the exception of Spain?

Mr. Cook: I had criticisms of the last Labour Government, and I voiced them at the time. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] I did not wait until the Prime Minister departed before voicing them. That Labour Government did not have the cushion of £60,000 million of oil revenue, they maintained a surplus in manufacturing throughout their period in office, kept unemployment to below half the level that this Government have ever achieved and had an increase in manufacturing investment greater than anything that this Government, with the advantage of oil, have achieved. When I look back on that record, I realise what the economic strategy of that Labour Government achieved.

If the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) participates in the debate, I hope that he will refer to the fact that in his constituency unemployment has increased 91 per cent. in the past three years. If he expresses his views on the future of industry and the economy, I hope that he will do it on behalf of his constituents who have been made unemployed by this Government, because those are the people whose concerns we are voicing in the debate.

I was referring to figures on manufacturing investment. In every year of that Labour Government, there was an increase in net manufacturing investment. We have to adjust investment figures to take into account the rate at which old plant is scrapped. In only three out of the past 13 years have the Government managed to provide more manufacturing investment than the rate at which machinery has been scrapped. In every one of the other 10 years, more machines have been scrapped than new ones installed. That is why our industrial capacity is getting smaller.

Behind the abstract cash figures, there are real factory closures. In 1979, when the Conservatives took office, there were 908 factories with more than 1,000 employees. There are now only 383 such factories. Last year alone, one in four factories in London shut. *[Laughter.]* Conservative Members laugh, but to those who worked in those factories it was no laughing matter. That is why it is so facile for the Government amendment to say that they have put the framework for growth in place.

Those factories have closed. We cannot pull the dust sheets off the machinery and kick it back into life. The machines were put under the hammer, and the best of them went to competitor nations. The skilled work force, teams of people who knew how to work together and do their job, has gone. Putting those people back to work will be more difficult than buying machinery off the shelf.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I am listening carefully to the hon. Gentleman, whose analysis is familiar, if a little dated. Does he not realise, for example, that, in advanced countries in the modern world, the right way to measure the performance of manufacturing in this or any other OECD country is by output and productivity? There is a structural shift in all manufacturing sectors in all our partner countries, and, as a result of automation, it is away from manufacturing employment, towards services and other employment. If the hon. Gentleman uses that measurement of output, does he acknowledge that, since 1979, which is the start of the period in the motion, manufacturing output has risen by 7 per cent?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman is quite right—in Britain, it rose by 7 per cent. But in Japan it rose by 70 per cent., and in Germany it rose by 40 per cent. We have had the lowest increase in output in the OECD, and the second lowest in the G7 countries. I gave the hon. Gentleman the figures earlier, and I shall give him another figure to bring him up to date. In the hon. Gentleman's constituency, the rise in unemployment in the past three years has been 240 per cent. I shall give way to him again if he can tell me in what other OECD or G7 country there has been such an increase in unemployment in the past three years. I look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Forman: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for indulging in genuine debate. It is simply the case that unemployment was satisfactorily low in my constituency throughout the 1980s. Alas, it has risen rather sharply, but I am confident that the Government's policies will put us back on track for more jobs and more activity.

Mr. Cook: I am quite sure that the hon. Gentleman's constituents are bright enough to spot that there is something odd and imbalanced about an equation showing that the Government's policies will put them back to work. Of course, the Government's policies had nothing to do with putting them out of work in the first place. There are now more than 4,000 unemployed people in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I admit that that is not as many as in my constituency, but such unemployment is entirely novel in his constituency and in the areas which, we were told at the last election, would be the boom areas of Britain. They are now the unemployed areas of Britain.

On the border of my constituency and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), we used to have the Leyland tractor factory. When it was built it was the largest machine shop in Britain. It has gone. The machines were stripped, the cranes were scrapped and the sheds were demolished. There is no point in telling the railings that surround the wasteland of grass and concrete there that the fundamentals of the economy are coming right and that production can be resumed. That factory has gone for ever, and the communities that have seen such factories close have a simple, traditional view of the Prime Minister's economic policies. It is that we should try to understand them a little less and try to condemn them a little more. But who are we to condemn?

We are less unhappy to condemn the Prime Minister's predecessor, and we do so with some credibility, because we condemned her economic policies while she was still there. I will put in a good word for the noble Lady of Kesteven. She does not deserve all the blame that is being heaped upon her. She went two and a half years and a general election ago, and the present Prime Minister has been in office all that time. Since he took over, 750,000 manufacturing jobs have gone, exactly the figure that the

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hon. Member for Amber Valley quoted for the entire period of the last Labour Government, which was twice as long.

Every six weeks, British manufacturing has lost the equivalent of the entire work force of ICI. Those jobs have been lost in the companies that formed the backbone of our industrial economy. Within the past quarter alone, Ford, British Aerospace, Lucas and Marconi have announced redundancies. Last Friday, Belling, a household name since 1912, went into liquidation. On Thursday, Rolls-Royce is due to announce results, amid speculation that it will also announce 2,000 redundancies.

Those are the companies on which we depend to provide the exports we need to pay our way in the world. Their results and their difficulties must be seen against our trade figures. From the industrial revolution to 1982, we had a manufacturing surplus in every year. In every year since 1982, we have had a deficit in manufactures. We now have a deficit with western and eastern Europe and with north, central and south America. The only continent with which we have a trade surplus is Africa.

We cannot run a permanent deficit with the rest of the world. We certainly cannot run it when the oil runs out, and the Government's biggest failure is that they have wasted a whole decade in which they had the cushion of oil that could have enabled Britain to restructure and invest in its future. They could have done that if they had listened to what we urged upon them—action on investment, not just tax breaks for the big companies but grants to the small companies making no profit and unable to claim tax allowance.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman bear in mind the fact that present Labour party policy is that increasing taxation would have a bad effect on the country at a time of recession, whereas this time last year precisely the opposite was being urged? What is the position?

Mr. Cook: We await with bated breath what will happen next week. I look forward the hon. Gentleman's intervention in the Budget speech. I put the question back to the hon. Gentleman. I can well understand his concern about the recession, because unemployment in his constituency has risen 177 per cent. in the past three years. There are now in his constituency twice as many people unemployed and unable to pay any tax increases that the hon. Gentleman might think of.

We also urged the Government to end the rip-off of the business expansion scheme, to focus on industry instead of on speculation in property. We urged on the Government action to strengthen the regions, to bring in regional development agencies, to work with local industry and local communities, to build on the strengths of local economies and to fill the local gaps in investment.

We urged on the Government action to develop skills, to bring in a training levy, so that everyone would have a chance of training even if an employer wanted to duck expenditure on training. We urged on the Government action to balance the priorities between finance and industry, so that we would not have the perverse priorities of the past two years, in which dividends have risen by 20 per cent. while investment has fallen by 13 per cent.

We also urged action to protect successful industrial companies from being taken over by hostile predators, so that managers need not constantly look over their shoulders at their share price and divert into keeping up dividends the money that should go into investment, research and training.

That programme was repeatedly published and repeatedly argued. Ministers never listened. Instead, they pursued policies that have compounded the damage of their economic programme. They deregulated the bus industry, and manufacturing orders for heavy buses collapsed. In 1980, 3,000 heavy buses were registered. In 1991, 600 were registered. Try telling the people who used to make those buses in Preston and Workington that the Government support manufacturing industry.

The Government privatised British Telecom, and Britain moved from a surplus in trade in telecommunications of £250 million to a deficit of exactly as much last year.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): What effect would raising taxation have on the manufacturing sector?

Mr. Cook: I remind the hon. Gentleman that we have proposed to cut tax on manufacturing industry by enhanced capital allowances. *[Interruption.]* With the greatest respect, the last Labour Government ran capital allowances for industry throughout their period. Capital allowances were abolished by this Government in a Budget that was presented on the basis that the service industries would substitute for what was being cut from capital taxation.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I shall return to my speech.

Not only did the Government cause the collapse in the bus production industry, not only have they turned a surplus into a deficit in telecommunications: they sold British Rail Engineering Ltd. In the past three years, imports of railway rolling stock have risen by 300 per cent.

The President of the Board of Trade has made his very own contribution to the gallery of policies undermining British industry. His largest initiative since taking office has been to try to close 31 pits without once considering the impact on the mining engineering industry, where another 20,000 jobs would go in manufacturing—in a manufacturing industry that was competitive internationally but could not survive its domestic market going. It has started already. MECO, the mining equipment company, laid off 300 workers last week because it could not survive the loss of orders from the pits.

The right hon. Gentleman's problem is that he has commitments to live up to, and they do not sound as good now as when he put them in his speeches. There is the demand that he made in 1986 when he roamed the wilderness—or at any rate the High Peak business club—when he called for the Department of Trade and Industry

"to become the leading British ministry to spearhead industrial regeneration and to be an equal partner with the Treasury."

Well, the right hon. Gentleman is there now. He is the head of that leading British Ministry. Where is the equal partnership with the Treasury?

In January, the Treasury cut interest rates. Three hours later, the President was asked by a BBC correspondent to

comment on it. The head of the leading British Ministry, the equal partner with the Treasury, replied, "What interest rate cut?" The President has had to put up with some ill-natured fun from people saying that nobody had told him. But, for myself, I do not think that it is important that, having taken the decision, nobody thought to tell him afterwards. For me, what is important, what is revealing, is that nobody consulted him about the decision before it was taken; that, on this important matter of economic policy, the Department of Trade and Industry was never consulted.

There is other evidence that the Government give no priority to industry and no priority to the Department of Trade and Industry. That evidence is in the budget of the right hon. Gentleman's Department. Under the heading

"Measures relating to individual industries and other programmes",

we find a budget that will fall from £470 million three years ago to £9 million three years from now. That is a cut of 98 per cent. Not much room for intervention before every meal there.

The Treasury has put the right hon. Gentleman on something of a slimmer's diet. The total budget for his Department three years from now falls through the £1 billion floor. He will then tie for bottom place in the spending table of Cabinet Departments; not in equal partnership with the Treasury, but in equal partnership with the Department of National Heritage. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will have a budget exactly three times the entire budget of the Department of Trade and Industry.

I have no doubt that there are important spending programmes at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; that there are, no doubt, subsidies necessary to rural life welcomed by many Conservative Members present who oppose subsidies to manufacturing industry. But no one has claimed that, when recovery comes, it will be led by agriculture. We have not reached that stage of de-industrialisation, even under this Government. There is something deeply perverse about the priorities of a Government who will cheerfully cough up three times the spending on farmers that they will provide for the total industrial economy of Britain.

There is a simple test of whether the Government are now ready to change those priorities. There is a simple way of telling whether the Prime Minister means it when he tells us that he passionately believes in expanding manufacturing industry. Will they intervene, as the Governments of Holland and Belgium have intervened, to save Leyland DAF? After all, we have, or at any rate we had, more DAF workers than Holland, or Holland and Belgium put together—skilled workers, people whose skills we need if we hope to become competitive in the future. Half the output from Leyland DAF is exported.

Mr. Nicholls: No one will buy the trucks.

Mr. Cook: Half the output is exported. It is bought by people outside Britain, giving Britain £250 million. They are buying the trucks.

Nor can we afford to lose the suppliers to Leyland DAF —6,000 of them. The print-out as applied to Leyland DAF takes this huge amount of paper to record. There is one in nearly every Tory constituency. There are suppliers to DAF in the constituencies of the Secretary of State for Health, the Secretary of State for Transport and the chairman of the Tory party. If they thought that Leyland DAF was not an issue for them, they had better think again. Yet, despite that intimate link to their own constituencies, what a contrast in industrial strategy.

In Holland, the Government are taking part in rescue talks, leaning on the banks, calling together all parties, really intervening to find a solution and investing in the company because they have confidence in its future. Here, we have a Government who have left it to the receiver to salvage what he can.

At Question Time last month, the President told me that his Minister of State had been in touch with his opposite number in the Dutch Government. The President will be aware that I tabled a private notice question asking what form that in-touchness took. He replied that, on 4 February, the Minister of State spoke to the Dutch Minister on the phone. The talks about the rescue package lasted eight weeks before they collapsed. It is five weeks since the receiver was called in.

The Ministerial contact that the Government can list in a parliamentary answer is one telephone call. Is it any surprise that more jobs are going in Britain than in Holland? Will it be any surprise if British industry has difficulty succeeding in the single European market, when the industries of every other country get the kind of partnership that Holland has shown and the industries of Britain get none?

We all pay a cost for the decline of Britain's manufacturing base, but those who pay the highest cost are those who have lost their jobs and the young people who have lost their opportunity to get jobs. In 1979, more than 7 million people were employed in Britain's manufacturing industries. The number today is 4·5 million. For every 10 jobs in manufacturing when the Government came to office, four have gone.

The final irony is that, while the Government will not intervene to save jobs before a factory closes, they have to intervene when the workers are sacked, by picking up the bill for unemployment. The cost is £9,000 a year for every unemployed person—£27 billion at the present rate of unemployment. Surely it would be better to put that money into the economy, to keep factories open, than to pick up the bill when they close.

Unemployment is a tragedy wherever it strikes. It is corrosive to men over the age of 55 who find that they may never work again. It is devastating to the lone parent who loses a part-time job that can make the difference between survival and destitution. Most of all, unemployment is a tragedy when it happens to young people, because it sours their hope and saps their energy. Unemployment among those below the age of 25 is double the national average.

As I was working on my speech on Sunday, I was interrupted by the arrival of six unemployed teenagers from my constituency who had nowhere to sleep that night. They were not dumb, feckless or aggressive. They had gone through an exhaustive list of agencies, and had applied correctly to every agency that they could that day. I have to report that I failed them. I spent an hour telephoning the same agencies, and I received the same answer—that all of them had been full for the past fortnight and had nowhere to put anybody else, because they had so many other teenagers in the same circumstances.

I was struck by how different were their opportunities from those that I and others of my generation enjoyed at the same age. Teenagers of my generation went to college, got a job, or started an apprenticeship—I cannot

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remember the last time that I met an apprentice. To teenagers of my generation, the idea that six of us would end up without a job and a home would have sounded like pure fantasy.

There are now 800,000 people under the age of 25 without a job—enough to populate Newcastle, Nottingham and Norwich, and leave enough over to populate half of Northampton. When we express our concern for those young unemployed, we are accused of talking Britain down. We do not raise the case of those young people to talk them down. We raise it because we know their potential, know that they have natural energy, and know their need for realistic goals and ambitions. We understand that it is the talents and energy of those young people on which we must build this nation's future. That is something it is not wise to understand less.

The nation that does not understand that is a nation without a future. That is why we will tonight condemn a Government who have failed to invest in that future.

5.23 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'recognises the importance of the manufacturing base to the wealth creation process in this country; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on setting in place the basic framework for economic recovery—low inflation, low interest rates, good industrial relations and a low tax regime—supported by measures in the Autumn Statement; applauds Her Majesty's Government on its success in attracting more inward investment than any of the United Kingdom's Community partners; acknowledges the widely reported signs of recovery in business confidence; recognises the unparalleled opportunities to help individuals to get back to work; and looks forward with confidence to the prospect of a return to sustained growth.'.

It is not possible to overstate the trivialisation of the critical issues that the House is debating to which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) returns time and again. Everybody knows that the trading world—our major customers—has been experiencing a significant and prolonged recession. The political complexion of the Government of our trading partners makes no difference—whether it be America, which has gone through a very difficult period but is now recovering; Germany, which is now heading down; right-wing Governments; or France and Spain, which have considerable economic difficulties. No nation broadly the equivalent of our own has been able to stand apart from that recession process.

As the House knows full well, with a nation such as ours, which has such a high proportion of its gross domestic product exported, it is utterly naive and totally irresponsible to try to give the impression that somehow this country's economy can stand apart from the impact of that recession across the world.

It is characteristic of the systematic policy of the hon. Member for Livingston of undermining this country that he seeks to parade our problems as uniquely British and uniquely related to the late 1980s. The hon. Gentleman has become one of industry's greatest salesmen. The problem is that it is the industrial interests of France, Germany, America and Japan that he is selling—and selling at the expense of British industry, British investment, and British jobs.

In the emotional end to his speech, the hon. Gentleman drew our attention to the problems of Leyland DAF. I will apologise to no one for the concern that we share for the problems of Leyland DAF. The hon. Gentleman totally fails to understand that the Dutch and Belgian Governments had to act so quickly because under the rules of receivership in those countries, it is not possible for the receiver to use money that is the product of the business. Instead, the receiver must look for outside funds. In this country, the receiver can use the funds of the business to keep it in existence.

A British bank provided the money that enabled the receiver to continue the activities of those businesses, whereas the hon. Gentleman's contribution to the position taken by the British banks was to suggest that they had pulled the rug from under Leyland DAF. There he was again, undermining the British banks—just as he undermines British industry.

The most dispiriting aspect of today's debate is the wording of the Opposition motion. It contains not a word of praise for British companies, and no recognition of a single person out there who is selling, manufacturing, marketing or exporting to help Britain to win. Nothing at all—except the carping, whingeing criticism of the hon. Member for Livingston, whose closest experience of the entrepreneurial society was his role as campaign co-ordinator in 1985, when he tried to sell the Labour party to the British people—and laid the foundations for the second worst defeat in the party's history. The hon. Gentleman's capacity to exploit the electorate's fears in the search of profit for the Labour party is utterly staggering.

There are no credible policies left for the left. I reject absolutely the gross distortion of the 1980s that the Opposition motion parades before the House, because it is not true. It is not true to say that our manufacturing industry is collapsing. Despite the recession, output remains more than one fifth higher than at the bottom of the last recession in 1981. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] The only fair comparison is to take the bottom of a recession with the bottom of a recession, the top of the peak with the top of the peak.

Investment is more than one third higher, productivity is two thirds higher, and exports are four fifths higher.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, in the early 1980s, south Humberside suffered massive structural unemployment from the decline in the fishing and steel industries? Will my right hon. Friend share with the House and with the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) his visit to my constituency just 10 days ago, when he performed the topping-out ceremony for the new Kimberly-Clark factory, which has £12 million of DTI finance, and at which 700 people will be newly employed with effect from next year, rising to 2,500? Is it not the case that unemployment in my constituency has fallen from about 6,000 in 1987 to 4,500 and that it is now below the national average? Is not that an example of the achievements of the regeneration of British industry?

Mr. Heseltine: That is what I call speaking for England. *[Interruption.]* I am certainly not prepared to share my experience of visiting my hon. Friend's constituency with the hon. Member for Livingston, who would be embarrassed to hear of the success that we saw there.

Much more important, the motion reveals how little the Labour party understands the achievements of the past decade—how little it understands the realities of world competition, or the degree of change that the 1990s will continue to demand. Let us remember—although it is a sickening prospect—the end of the 1970s. Then, this country had a reputation as the sick man of Europe. We had been losing our share of world trade in manufactured goods for 30 years, and probably longer; we were overtaxed, and we were over-nationalised. We had failed to regenerate our small industrial and commercial companies, we had inadequate training, we were under-educating our children and we were gripped in an inflationary spiral.

To make matters worse, we had an appalling industrial relations record. Our managers could not manage: they faced strikes in their own factories, in the factories of their suppliers and in the public services. In the starkest terms, British industry was uncompetitive. That was the inheritance that our party came to deal with in 1979.

Today, all that the hon. Member for Livingston can say, half apologetically, is, "I had my doubts about the record of the last Labour Government." At least I said what my doubts were when I was on the Back Benches; it took the hon. Gentleman a long time to work out what his were.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend recall that, at the very end of the 1960s —after a long period of Labour government—Michael Shanks, the guru of the Labour party, published a Penguin book called "The Stagnant Society"? That book bore true testimony to Labour's period of office.

As my right hon. Friend may have noticed, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) completely ignored the underlying legacy with which British industry was faced: the appalling reforms forced on our school system during that period of Labour Government and the fact that the proportion of 18-year-olds in higher education had fallen under Labour—the only time since the war when it had done so.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to point out Labour's critical failure to improve our education standards.

In 1979, the problems that we faced were deep seated and long term. In large measure, they were a deliberate consequence of the Labour party's policies. We always made it clear that the Labour party, its policies, its manifestos and its dogma were a disaster; now, even Labour itself has come to recognise that those policies are a disaster. The party leader himself has realised that change must come, simply because his party's policies have proved to be a disaster. The problem for him is that his party now thinks that he is a disaster as well.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No.

How can the hon. Member for Livingston possibly have the nerve to come to the House and lecture us on industrial policy, when the whole House knows that the closest thing to an industrial policy in the Labour party is an apology for the past and a promise that it will not do the same all over again?

Let me set the 1980s in context. I shall begin with industrial relations. Labour resisted every step of reform as it fought to preserve the privileges of the trade unions which provided its funds. What is the result? The result is that this country has the best industrial relations for 100 years.

Then there is privatisation. There was never a policy more calculated to destroy the motivation and resilience of an industry than the policy of transferring that industry's ownership to the state. In state hands, industries are subsidised by taxpayers, suffocated by political and bureaucratic control and denied the chance to compete overseas. Their investment programmes are curtailed to meet the public expenditure constraints of the national Government. That was our inheritance—and the greatest single justification for all the criticisms that we have made over the years is the fact that Labour now has not the nerve to say that it will ever introduce nationalisation again.

So unaware is the hon. Member for Livingston of the damage that nationalisation did to this country that he points to my Department's budget which has been cut. Why has it been cut? Because the losses of the nationalised industries have been turned into the profits of the privatised industries. What are those industries doing? I will tell the House what they are doing.

Mr. Chisholm: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Heseltine: In 1979——

Hon. Members: Give way.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it not customary, and polite, for Ministers to give way to Back Benchers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is entirely up to the Member who has the Floor to decide who to give way to.

Mr. Heseltine: I am, as a matter of custom, always polite. I will give way to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon).

Mrs. Mahon: I thank the right hon. Gentleman. He will remember Mr. Catton, from Eliot Machine Tools in Halifax, who wrote asking whether he could intervene when Customs and Excise—quite wrongly—fined the firm. It is struggling in the present climate.

That happened just after the right hon. Gentleman made his speech about intervening before breakfast, dinner, tea and so forth. Will he now tell us why he wrote back to Mr. Catton saying that he could not possibly intervene? The company has now had to be taken over.

Mr. Heseltine: As I am sure the hon. Lady knows, if Customs and Excise pursue outstanding bills, that must be a matter for them. It would be utterly wrong for Ministers to interfere with the course of their legal processes. *[Interruption.]* This is a novel development. The Labour party clearly believes that it is right for Ministers to intervene in the course of justice. That is a chill warning of what we might expect if it ever returned to power.

I was speaking of the transformation of the loss-making nationalised industries. In 1979, those industries cost the Exchequer £3 billion, some 1·5 per cent. of gross domestic product. Last year, the privatised industries paid £2 billion in taxes. That is why my Department's budget has changed so dramatically.

[Mr. Heseltine]

Moreover, those companies—now in the private sector—are out in the world trading place, winning contracts for Britain. In 1982, the United Kingdom produced 14 million tonnes of crude steel and exported 3 million tonnes of finished steel. Last year, we produced 16 million tonnes of crude steel and exported 8 million tonnes of finished steel. We now have a trade surplus of about 3 million tonnes, compared with a deficit in 1982. Not the least reason for that is the fact that British Steel now produces a tonne of steel in under five man hours, compared with over 13 in 1979.

Many of the privatised industries tell a similar success story. We do not hear about that from Labour.

Mr. Chisholm: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I am not going to give way. I am going to tell the House how well the privatised industries are doing. British Gas, in partnership with Agip—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) must not half get up and shout across the Chamber. *[Interruption.]* Order. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House a long time.

Mr. Heseltine: That is characteristic of Opposition Members. All that I want to do is to parade before the House the success of British companies. All that the Opposition want to do is to make sure that nobody listens.

Mr. Chisholm: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I am not going to give way. I am going to explain to the House the success of British companies. I do not mind how much the Opposition like or dislike it—I am going to do it.

British Gas, in partnership with Agip, is investing over £4 billion in the next 10 years on the exploration and development of a huge new gas field in Kazakhstan. British Telecom is now one of the world's foremost telecommunication companies. Last year, it won a contract worth £350 million to run a telecoms network for the New South Wales Government.

Mr. Chisholm: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been in the House for about a year, and I seek your guidance. When I was elected to this place I thought that I was coming to a debating Chamber. Can you please tell me how I can turn this House into a debating Chamber? I have never seen anything like this throughout the past year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House is in order. We are having a fulsome debate.

Mr. Heseltine: The problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there have to be two sides to a debate, but the Opposition have no case to make.

Thames Water, as part of a consortium, has won a £448 million Turkish water plant construction contract. Instead of monopolistic Government ownership, in addition to the profits and the contracts, there are now some 9 million individual shareholders—three times the number there were in 1979. The privatisation programme was the second major change that was brought about in the 1980s, to the immense benefit of the national economy.

My responsibilites include one of the last of the nationalised industries. The hon. Member for Livingston referred to the coal review. I have always made it clear to the House that there are no easy solutions to this intractable set of problems.

At the end of January, the Trade and Industry Select Committee produced its report on British energy policy and the market for coal. I pay tribute to the amount of detailed work that the Committee put into its report. The Government will publish their detailed response shortly. [HON. MEMBERS: "When?"] The Select Committee has recognised that the central issue is the market for coal. It makes no sense for British Coal to continue to produce coal that no one wants to buy.

The stark facts are these. Over 30 million tonnes of coal are stocked at the generators. Over 10 million tonnes are stocked at the pithead. There is enough coal for the rest of this year without another tonne being mined. Well over £1 billion of coal is stocked in mountains that get bigger with every shift that is worked.

The Select Committee's central conclusion is that it should be possible to find a market for an additional 16 million tonnes of deep-mined coal in each of the next five years. It suggests that the Government should require the generators to contract for an additional 5 million tonnes on top of that.

The Select Committee is right to see the size of the market as the central issue. It estimated total electricity demand in England and Wales over the next five years as equivalent to 586 million tonnes of coal. Cminus, the consultants who advised my Department and whose report I have published, puts the figure at only 565 million tonnes. British Coal puts it lower still—at 563 million tonnes. These differences may seem small, but they remove one quarter of the additional market of 80 million tonnes which the Select Committee believes that it has identified.

No one can predict with accuracy the precise scale of a market five years ahead. The Select Committee's figures are at the very top of the range. The critical question that we face, therefore, is the extent to which private sector companies will contract for coal. Those companies will form their own judgment about the size of the market.

The fuel mix is equally important. I note that the Select Committee had considered carefully the extent to which the market for coal could be increased by interfering with gas or nuclear. I have noted with interest that the Select Committee has come out against that. This has no doubt been greeted with relief by many hon. Members' constituents whose jobs would be put at risk. I have said it before and I shall say it again: we cannot interfere to protect jobs in one part of the economy without losing jobs and investment elsewhere.

One of the most attractive of the Select Committee proposals to many hon. Members is to restrict electricity supplied from France via the French interconnector. I have looked into that issue extremely carefully. I myself shared with the Select Committee the concern to examine again the extent to which the scope for additional sales of coal rests upon reducing imports of electricity. I have also taken legal advice on the matter, a summary of which I intend to make public.

The position is clear. As I am sure the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will remember, measures to restrict imports of electricity across the interconnector would be contrary to article 30 of the treaty of Rome. It would also put the Government at

considerable financial risk in relation to indemnities given at the time of electricity privatisation and reported to the House.

The effect of removing Electricité de France's non-leviable status, as the Select Committee recommends, would be highly uncertain and may lead to EDF being allowed access to the same premium prices available to Nuclear Electric and financed through the levy. The regional electricity companies would in turn have to be put under an obligation to purchase electricity from EDF. Far from reducing imports from France, this would reinforce their position, and our consumers would end up paying more for their electricity.

I therefore have to tell the House that the proposal by the Select Committee to reduce the amount of electricity coming across the interconnector from the present 6·5 million tonnes of coal equivalent to zero, or anywhere near that, is not an option, but we are still looking at whether anything might be done. To this end, my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy will go to Paris tomorrow to follow up the conversations that we have been conducting with the French Government.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No, not at the moment.

I now turn to the suggestion that the additional tonnages that the Select Committee believes that it has identified can be purchased through a subsidy at a total cost of £500 million. This is intended to reflect the difference between British and world prices. It is an interesting approach. The Select Committee suggests that this could be achieved at a cost of no more than £5 per tonne, but I regret that I cannot agree with the Select Committee's assessment of the likely costs. I am continuing to discuss these matters with the generators.

Finally, I turn to the proposal that we should legislate to require the generators to take coal at a price and in a quantity that they would judge to be against their commercial interests. I have to say, at least to my hon. Friends, that this is not an attractive proposition. I have never hidden my regard for the immense amount of work that the Select Committee undertook, but many intractable problems remain to be resolved. The Government have to weigh all the consequences. I expect to set out the Government's reply to the Select Committee and to publish the White Paper shortly.

Dr. Michael Clark *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Dr. Michael Clark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Of course, the detail of the Select Committee report will be debated at another time, but my right hon. Friend referred to the legal position on importing electricity from France—we shall consider that matter later—and I therefore invite him to consider the legal position on our using the French grid system, within the Common Market spirit of good will, to export electricity to Italy and Spain. If that does not happen, the French will have the prerogative to export electricity to us while we are denied the opportunity to export to France and Spain, because the French will wish to keep that market, too.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is well informed on such matters. I assure him that my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy will discuss that and a range of other matters with the French Government tomorrow. I also reassure the House that there have already been consultations and discussions with the French on that matter.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): To take up the point of the hon. Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark), does the President of the Board of Trade accept that nobody suggests that we should terminate the interconnector with France or reduce its use—certainly the Select Committee does not suggest that? The suggestion is that it should be operated as was intended in the first place, as a two-way exchange of electricity, which provides us with a market that would substitute up to 6 million tonnes of coal equivalent a year. Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that he is being asked simply to negotiate free and fair trade rather than allowing the French to have it all their own way?

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will wish to consider the point that he is pursuing in the light of the legal advice about the exact position. The contracts are long standing and subject to the law. The hon. Gentleman will want to consider the matter further.

I will go back to what I was saying, dealing with the record of the 1980s——

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: Is it about coal?

Mr. Mackinlay: No, it is about the fact that the right hon. Gentleman is going backwards.

Mr. Heseltine: No, I shall not give way. I must make progress.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth) *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: I must now make progress.

A critical component of a healthy economy is the vibrancy of the small and medium-sized company. Today at last, Britain is generating small and medium-sized businesses. When the Government were elected in 1979, there were 1·75 million of them; today there are 1 million more, which grew and developed in the 1980s. Even during the recession of 1992 about 400,000 business start-ups took place.

Why did that happen? It happened because we changed the tax regime to enable it to happen. Changes in corporation tax, in inheritance tax and in income tax made it pay to invest, to hold on, to take risks and to start businesses. It left discretionary wealth in the hands of people who were prepared to invest it in the enterprise culture. It is from the small and medium-sized company sector of the economy that jobs come.

The hon. Member for Livingston made a great deal of the issue of unemployment—but let us consider the facts. Let me remind him that, over the last economic cycle, in 1979-90, the work force in employment grew by 1·5 million, twice as fast as in the rest of the EC. Even in recession, employment now is almost 1·5 million higher than it was 10 years ago. We still have a higher proportion of the adult population in work than almost any other European country.

Mr. MacKinlay *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: Let me put the heart of the matter to the hon. Member for Livingston. Has he any idea of the dilemma that our companies face? When he visits large companies, does he ever even look to see the changes that are there staring him in the face? He can walk round any company and ask any management; he can talk to the people employed there. There will be only one story, one explanation, one option. Fewer people are employed, in the drive for those companies to survive in an ever more competitive marketplace. Fewer people are employed as investment—the very investment that the hon. Gentleman keeps talking about—replaces people's jobs.

For example, we are producing 300,000 more vehicles a year than we were 10 years ago—but 100,000 fewer people are employed in the industry producing them.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): Although I have been in the House only for a few months, I worked in business for the previous 18 years, 15 of which—during the 1970s and 1980s—I spent selling the products of British manufacturing industry against the competition. I totally support what my right hon. Friend says about the competitiveness of British manufacturing industry. Is he aware that only last November the shadow Chancellor said in *The Guardian* that in Labour's view the public sector would be the engine of growth? How out of date can the Labour party get?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend makes a telling point. Let me add to it: the other day the shadow Chancellor, looking at the success of the privatised utilities, argued that there should be a windfall tax. The Labour party does not have the money to renationalise businesses, so now it wants to tax them into subjection. It is the old story—when Labour Members see success they want to tax it—before breakfast, before lunch, before tea, and before dinner. Then they get up the next day and start taxing it all over again. That is when Labour Members are really happy, destroying success at every turn, every day, all the time.

It is our duty to tell companies that they have our support in the battle to survive, even if that means telling the people the truth about the nature of change and the process of moving from job to job. Let us be clear——

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Heseltine: No, I shall not give way.
The Government strategy is clear.

Mr. Mackinlay: What about the south-east?

Mr. Heseltine: What about a bit of silence, for a minute?

We must set the conditions for growth and pursue competitiveness over the whole range of Government policy. That means low inflation, low interest rates, a competitive pound and support for exports, higher education, research and development and for training.

Now I come to the next great success of the 1980s. The United Kingdom received one third of all inward investment into the EC in 1991. We have 41 per cent. of Japanese inward investment and 36 per cent. of the investment from the United States. It has been estimated that inward investment in 1991-92 created 23,000 jobs and safeguarded 29,000 more. That is success on a massive scale and the Labour party would do well to remember it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Livingston called for an industrial strategy——

Mr. Mackinlay: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I should be most grateful if the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) would recognise that the Secretary of State is not giving way. [HON. MEMBERS: "He is frit."] That may be hon. Members' view, but the Secretary of State is not giving way to the hon. Member for Thurrock.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Member for Livingston called for an industrial strategy. What is the cornerstone of that strategy? It is to impose the social chapter of British industry. Spain, under a socialist Government, has 18·3 per cent. unemployment; companies are leaving France to bring jobs here, away from a socialist Government; German industrialists are shifting manufacturing to central Europe; as a result of the Maastricht treaty, Britain has the opportunity to attract inward investment on a growing scale. We now have the chance to restore the manufacturing base that the Labour party did so much to erode over 40 years—and what is Labour's policy? It is to impose the social chapter.

Jacques Delors says that Britain can be a paradise for Japanese investment. Good. Today, not tomorrow, please. And thank you.

The Labour party says that it has changed; it will never change—because change requires courage, guts and vision. Change requires the will to stand up to vested interests and the Labour party is nothing except the representative of——

Mr. Jimmy Boyce (Rotherham): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to stop the President of the Board of Trade in full flow, but there is a point of order.

Mr. Boyce: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is it for me?

Mr. Boyce: Yes, it is. I wonder whether the President of the Board of Trade could—*[Interruption.]* Would you be kind enough to ask the President of the Board of Trade to lower his voice a couple of octaves because we can hear his ranting through the microphones on this side of the House at the same time as his ranting from the other side of the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Neither the content nor the volume are the responsibility of the Chair.

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member only came into the Chamber a few minutes ago and he has been leaping up and down ever since. He must resume his seat.

Mr. Heseltine: I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have not offended you by the scale of my voice. I tend to adjust the volume depending on the penetration of the Opposition that I must make.

I think that the House will wish me to extend a note of sympathy to the hon. Member for Livingston, because the

disaster scenario to which he clings becomes less credible every day. Survey after survey shows confidence and recovery. The latest surveys by the Confederation of British Industry and the Institute of Directors show that British business knows that the recovery is coming and is under way. The surveys all have the same message—that Britain is moving ahead.

In the three months to January, retail sales were 1·5 per cent. higher than a year earlier. In February, car registrations were 16 per cent. higher than the year earlier. In the fourth quarter of 1992, manufactured exports were at record levels, excluding oil and erratics, and were up 6·5 per cent. on a year earlier, and manufacturing investment was 5·5 per cent. up on the start of the year.

The poor old hon. Member for Livingston is stuck where he was a year ago—he is the only person whose performance has not improved during the past 12 months—when he was talking about health service trusts. The Opposition—led by the hon. Member for Livingston—engaged in a scandalous campaign and exploitation of public concern about the national health service. Yet what has been the Government's record under their stewardship of the NHS? More than 1 million more patients are being treated.

The hon. Member for Livingston is now in the business of undermining British industry, but let me tell him that British industry is already making a commendable job of undermining him. I hope that the House will finish the job tonight and will support the Government.

6.2 pm

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): Opposition Members and many Conservative Members—certainly those who are interested in manufacturing industry, of whom there are many on both sides of the House—will be most disappointed by the speech of the President of the Board of Trade.

The first part of his speech and the end of it were nothing but rant, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Boyce) said. One cannot substitute ranting for reason. The House is tired, and the country even more tired, of the right hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members, especially Ministers, blaming everyone but themselves for everything that happens.

I remind you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this debate is about manufacturing industry, which is rarely discussed in the House. That is a great shame, because I passionately believe that success and prosperity can only come to a nation with a viable manufacturing industry—a nation that makes goods that one can see and touch, goods that people need and want to buy—which is the basis of any sound economy.

The President of the Board of Trade talked not about manufacturing industry but about the world recession. Yes, we accept that there is a recession. He mentioned the demonology of a Labour Government 14 years ago. The Conservatives have been in power for 14 years, and surely must accept some responsibility. Indeed, I thought that the Prime Minister did so last week. I was truly delighted when he said that industry really matters and that we must consider that it matters. The following day he spoilt it all, because he feared that he would be in the bad books of his former boss if he was seen to criticise her.

However, I must admit, as my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) said, that the Prime Minister was first Financial Secretary to the Treasury and then Chancellor of the Exchequer when all those terrible things were happening to the economy—against his wishes, when he was in a minority. If he allowed that to happen, he must have been a powerful Chancellor.

I am also disappointed because the President's speech was an abuse of the House. He injected a statement into the middle of a speech about manufacturing industry, which is what most hon. Members have come here to talk about. He should have presented that statement to the House tomorrow and allowed hon. Members on both sides, but especially those representing coal-mining constituencies, to question him. They had no idea that he was going to make that statement today, and I remind the President that coal is an extractive industry and has nothing to do with manufacturing, which is what we are here to talk about.

I am also disappointed because I was delighted when the President of the Board of Trade received his present job. He may have forgotten this, but I have not; he came to Halton when I was acting in my capacity as president of the chamber of commerce, which I still am. At the time, the President was in the wilderness and out of office. He gave a first-rate speech, and talked about manufacturing industry, saying interesting things about it and criticising the Government for not being active enough in manufacturing industry.

Last April, I thought that he was the man to be President of the Board of Trade, and that at last we would have someone who cared about industry. What has happened throughout those 12 months until today? No interest whatsoever has been shown in manufacturing industry.

Many hon. Members firmly believe, as I do, that manufacturing industry matters. My father, both my grandfathers, my uncles, my father-in-law and most of my classmates all worked in manufacturing industry. My constituency of Halton comprises two towns—Runcorn and Widnes—which are both industrial and manufacturing towns, and the chemical industry or chemical-associated industries predominate. In the old days, we also had machine tools, foundries and engineering, all of which have disappeared, and the chemical industry can wither on the vine for lack of attention from the Government.

I see a fellow Cheshire Member, the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), in his place. I was delighted when he took the initiative last week of founding an advisory committee in the House, on an all-party basis, to advise manufacturing industry, because no one seems to care about it.

Hon. Members of all parties, including the Liberals and Conservatives, are genuinely worried about what is happening to manufacturing industry. That is why I found the President's speech so disappointing, because he did not describe any initiative, show any concern or look to the future. His speech was just dispair, attack and rant, and contained nothing about what the Government will do to assist manufacturing industry.

At the last count, unemployment was 14·9 per cent. in my constituency. The President of the Board of Trade mentioned the strikes that we suffered under Labour Governments, but he did not consider how many days are lost to industry because of unemployment. That figure is many tens of times more than the days lost through strikes under any Labour Government, but he did not say a word about that.

[Mr. Gordon Oakes]

I intend to be brief, but I want specifically to mention two means by which the Government—very often inadvertently, not wilfully—cause unemployment. The first concerns the chemical industry, which the President of the Board of Trade probably knew I would mention.

In my constituency, ICI manufactures chlorine, which consists of salt and electricity. Since privatisation took place, there has been a 66 per cent. increase in the cost of electricity. It is no coincidence that this year, for the first time since the war, ICI, that great industrial giant, announced a loss. Before electricity was privatised, ICI could buy its supply at a cheap rate because of market forces. There was no subsidy. The principle was that, if a supplier had a commodity that nobody else wanted at a particular time, it could be bought in large quantities at a lower-than-normal rate. ICI was able to secure its entire supply at a competitive rate.

I am not sure that the present suppliers of electricity, knowing how fearful would be the results of the cessation of chlorine manufacture, would not be willing to take part in a similar arrangement today, but that is forbidden by legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, South (Mr. Hall) put a question about this matter to the Prime Minister, but he received a very dusty answer. He then used an Adjournment debate to raise the subject, as he too has constituents who work in this industry. In another place, the right reverend prelate the Bishop of Chester raised the matter, as it affects his flock too. Their Lordships had a debate, in which peers from all parties spoke about this subject. The subject is intensely important, because cessation of the production of chlorine would affect 7,000 jobs directly and another 5,000 that are associated with that production.

A group of hon. Members from all parties—mostly Cheshire Members—requested a meeting with the Secretary of State to talk about this matter. I wrote to the right hon. Gentleman, and three weeks later I received a reply saying that he was too busy to see us, but offering an appointment with the Minister for Energy. But it was not just energy that we wanted to discuss; we wanted to talk about the chemical industry, one of whose basic ingredients is chlorine.

The loss of this industry would affect more than jobs in my constituency. This is a national problem. Other manufacturers of chemicals, steel manufacturers and other high-energy users would be involved. The President's current difficulties over the coal review might have been solved with the right approach in this area. I see that the right hon. Gentleman has gone. I make this point as the Member for a constituency that would be drastically affected if the event to which I refer were to take place, as is likely unless something is done. ICI will not be able to continue to produce chlorine at a loss. No firm could.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government could provide a solution to this problem almost immediately? The Government own 40 per cent. of the shares of PowerGen and National Power. As the major shareholder, they could intervene on behalf of the chemical industry in my right hon. Friend's constituency, save jobs in my constituency and support the industry in the north-west.

Mr. Oakes: Of course they could. They could deal with the regulations that are holding the whole process up. The industry would willingly co-operate, without any move by shareholders, in order to retain the market.

I should like to refer briefly to the pharmaceutical industry, which has been a money-spinner for this country. It is one of the most successful industries we have, yet the Government have proposed a limited list. I realise that the Secretary of State for Health has to make economies—I do not for one moment dispute that—but I am concerned about the way in which she has acted.

In 1985, the Government introduced a limited list. What happened to pharmaceuticals then? I am concerned not just with job losses but also with the inventiveness of the industry. In the categories prescribed in the limited list, not a single new drug has been brought forward. Indeed, research in respect of those categories has ceased.

On the other hand, 20 new drugs in categories not covered by the limited list have emerged. There are thousands of jobs in that field, too. It is a market in which we are leaders. We are going to lose not just the car, lorry and bus industries but also the chemical and pharmaceutical industries—largely as a result of neglect, largely because it seems that no Minister takes account of the employment implications of his decisions.

Under successive Governments, the climate of opinion about manufacturing has changed. The status of and respect for manufacturing could not be lower. I want to see that status and that respect raised. People ought to be proud to work in an industry that makes things. They ought to be proud of their role in the creation of objects that other people in the world need. Such an attitude used to exist.

Let the Government take the lead. Last week, the Prime Minister made a statement about his so-called review of the honours list. Why should not our inventors be honoured? It is even more important that we honour the people who put inventions into production. We invent things, but then we let them flow away to other nations to be developed. Why should there not be a specific honour in this field? It would cost nothing. Surely such people are more deserving of honours than sportsmen, actors, explorers and other people who find their names on the list.

Why do not schools put more emphasis on great British inventions, as happened when I was at school? The media, schools and universities should have their respect for manufacturing industries rekindled.

I repeat: manufacturing industry is the foundation of our prosperity. We have been asked whether we can expect prosperity to be led by agriculture. Of course not. Nor will it be led by the service industries or tourism. It goes without saying that we want those industries to prosper, but without manufacturing industry the future of this country is doomed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Sebastian Coe. *[Interruption.]*

6.17 pm

Mr. Sebastian Coe (Falmouth and Camborne): I am sorry that I was a little slow, Mr. Deputy Speaker. *[Laughter.]*

Any debate that takes as its theme the decline, or even the relative decline, of our manufacturing base has to lift the lid off a sad economic history, however ghoulish or

depressing that might be. The decline of our manufacturing industries has unfortunately been a feature of most elections since the turn of the century and a key and prominent subject for debate in the nine that have taken place since 1964.

Let there be no confusion. Let us not delude ourselves. This is all familiar stuff. We have been here before. Economic historians will belabour us with myriad excuses and reasons. We know what they are: empire preference, the destruction of British industry after the second world war, the determination to run a reserve currency, sometimes Treasury fixation with the value of currency, to the neglect of manufacturing considerations. We know the arguments about trade union beligerency, and we certainly know the arguments about some of our management shortcomings in terms of the manufacturing base.

One of the issues to which we should be addressing ourselves is the fact that really only in the last few years have we started the inevitable task of rebuilding, or beginning to build for the very first time, a modern industrial state.

It is fair to say that the Governments of other European countries and north America have responded differently to the construction of the modern industrial society and that those countries have been more effective than the United Kingdom in meeting educational needs. Some will even claim that there is something specific or peculiar about our response to manufacturing. Perhaps we display an anti-industrial ethos. To appreciate that, one need only consider where the forefathers of our industrial heritage chose to send their children to school—Harrow, Eton and the other great public schools that, for so many years, offered a classics, science-free education. I do not absolve the echelons of higher education from these shortcomings.

The issue of education is still alive and features prominently in current discussions. Far too often, we encourage youngsters to seek employment in the service sector, the City or at the Bar. They are told that it is more acceptable if one pursues such professions instead of opting for a manufacturing career on the factory floor.

I was brought up in Sheffield—one of this country's historically most productive cities. It was a jewel in our manufacturing crown, yet throughout the 1970s, when I was getting careers advice from schoolteachers and people who should have known better, I was encouraged, in common with the rest of my classmates, to take up employment in one of the non-productive sectors. It was more acceptable to work for the council than in any capacity on the factory floor. That attitude has been hugely damaging to our manufacturing industry and is responsible for the ethos that has surrounded most of the thinking about manufacturing for far too long.

As we trudge through the debates on education, amid the battle cries, squabbles and platitudes about the indispensability of a good education and meaningful training, let us not further delude ourselves. We have been here before, too. Even after the establishment of state education in 1870 there was little bias towards technical education. The reforms of 1902 dealt mainly with religious issues and little consideration was paid to our scientific base and training. The teaching provided by the grammar schools was based upon the classics-based education offered by the public schools rather than that offered by the technical high schools of Germany and France.

I beg the patience of the House while I read a quote from a royal commission report of 1868 on endowed schools:

> "Our evidence appears to show that our industrial classes have not even that basis of sound general education on which alone technical education can rest—unless we remedy that want, we shall gradually but surely find that undeniable superiority in wealth, and perhaps in energy, will not save us from decline."

That quote could have come from any Select Committee report of the past 15 years.

I do not absolve the upper echelons of higher education from guilt. In 1945, the Percy Committee recommended that the war-time output of engineers—around 3,000—should be maintained for at least 10 years. The universities could produce only 1,200, with the rest made up from technical colleges. Very few of those engineers were university graduates; the majority came from technical schools. Sir Lawrence Bragg, Cavendish professor at Cambridge, displayed breathtaking arrogance when he said that universities were designed to train the mind while technical schools were designed specifically to train people for jobs. Twenty-five years later, a study of 90 machine tool companies in the west midlands, employing 30,000 people, revealed that only 25 of them were engineering graduates.

The fact that only half of British youngsters between the ages of 16 and 18 participate in full-time education compared with 70 per cent. in Germany, Japan, France or the United States of America also has a bearing on the future of manufacturing. Equally, in 1990 some 40 per cent. of youngsters left school without any graded qualifications or with GCSE passes at no higher than grade D. Those factors place a huge burden on anyone who seeks to plan our manufacturing base for the next few years.

It is welcome that the core skills of those aged between 16 and 19 have been identified and are now being stressed. They are a strong factor in improving technical education, but we must still remove more of the barriers that exist between standard academic education and so-called "vocational training".

We have paid a high price not so much for the reckless radicalism of our educational establishments, but because of the institutional sclerosis that has led to comprehensive schools being modelled on grammar schools and polytechnics on universities when in the latter case the reverse should have been the case. What has happened as a result of that practice? By the end of the 1970s, we hardly had a technical school left. We have been left with an academic model that is irrelevant to, or at best frustrating for, a large proportion of our school population.

Ever since 1840, our inability to deliver the right kind of technical education has been our industrial dead weight —our industrial albatross. From the 1868 royal commission to which I have referred, the 1902 reforms, the Education Act 1944—the Butler Act, the Eccles White Paper on technical education of 1955 through to the core curriculum and the training and enterprise councils of today, the necessary words have been mouthed, but little has been done.

Are we sure that the messages that have emanated from this place in the past 40 years have been as supportive as they could have been to our manufacturing base? A quick glance down the list of previous Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry does not necessarily make the best reading, nor did they always offer the best message to our

[Mr. Sebastian Coe]

manufacturing industry. We went from the damaging interventionist meddling years of the 1960s and 1970s through to the equally damaging detachment displayed in the early 1980s

What of our civil service? What top-class advice has been offered by it? In the past, most civil servants were Euro-reluctants, imbued with the philosophy of nationalised industries. They had no hands-on experience of running an industry. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s they could not see what was obvious to everyone else about our future development within Europe.

There is nothing inevitable about relative or real-terms decline. We tend to use the word culture when we cannot explain something and I risk using it in this context. We have a culture—an industrial heritage. We are a manufacturing nation and every instinct in me tells me that that is so. By inclination we are not a series of motorways, mapping out non-productive distribution centres only.

If we are to recover from our manufacturing problems, we need a basic framework for economic recovery and I welcome the fact that the Government have set that in place. We need low inflation, low interest rates, good industrial relations and a low tax regime. Combined with that, however, we must build on the cultural ethos that we in Great Britain make things.

6.28 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) has addressed some of the gut issues that the President of the Board of Trade would have done well to address. Unfortunately, the right hon. Gentleman made his traditional, almost predictable, rant that was totally lacking substance.

It is interesting that in his peroration, the right hon. Gentleman suggested that everything in the garden was lovely, that the country was enjoying resounding success. He said that any suggestions to the contrary were either untrue, a socialist plot or put about by someone out of touch with reality. The hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne, however, has thoughtfully pointed out that a long-term problem has persisted under different Governments, and that a cultural change is needed if we are to get to grips with it.

May I first address the issue that the Prime Minister sought to address before he rather quickly backed out of it last week? He began to acknowledge the point that the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) also made—that the British economy will not be competitive unless it has a larger manufacturing base. It is as simple as that. The economic blizzard of 1979 to 1981, whatever else it did, even by the pretensions of the Government of the day, made our industry apparently leaner and fitter. Let us acknowledge that it may have done that, but unfortunately it also made it much smaller, and we have not, over the past 12 or 14 years, been able to break out of that problem. We have to address that very positively and constructively.

We would have liked to think that the President of the Board of Trade had some grasp of the urgency of the problem and of the need to look outside the narrow confines of party political rhetoric, and would start to get to grips with a problem that will require the minds and the application of politicians of all persuasions, including people outside this House—in industry, trade unions, the City and every other institution engaged in productive economic activity in this country.

It is time that the Government got out of the trenches and started to show a little constructive leadership in this matter. In that context, the President of the Board of Trade's speech was deeply depressing and extremely disappointing.

The Engineering Employers Federation, before Christmas, launched its idea of an industrial strategy. Two facts came out of that which hit me between the eyes, and which sum up, it seems to me, the situation we face and the need to take some positive action. It pointed out that the British economy had an apparently permanent propensity to consume 105 per cent. of its output. I suggest to all hon. Members that that is not a sustainable situation. It is likely to lead to permanent pressure on our exchange rates and to consequential effects on our internal economy.

Another more interesting point that it made was that an historical analysis of the past 60 years shows that the rate of return on investment in manufacturing industry was about 7·5 per cent., but, in the 1980s alone, the rate of return was about 18 per cent. We have now reaped the consequences of that candy-floss era. We all have to recognise that that is not a sustainable rate of return, that the financial institutions cannot look for it and must not expect it, and that industry has some right to expect a more realistic framework within which to raise money at a rate of return that makes sense, is sustainable, and takes account of the need for long-term strategy and thinking, and for investment to bear fruit.

Let me entertain the House with two or three fundamental statistics which put the situation over the past two or three years in context. The gross domestic fixed capital formation for manufacturing for 1992 was £10,285,000,000. That was 6·4 per cent. less than the figure for 1979. Even allowing for the fact that the President of the Board of Trade wanted to make comparisons with a different base rate, and even if one takes the best year of the past 14, which is 1985, we have just got back to slightly above that level. That is nothing to be proud of.

It is also true that, at the beginning of the last decade, we had a surplus in manufactured trade goods of £1 billion. In 1992, we had a £10 billion deficit. That was in the middle of a recession.

This debate is about unemployment, and I shall come back to that in a minute. It is worth recording that, in 1979, manufacturing industry employed 7·1 million people. Last year, it was down to 4·5 million, a reduction of 2·6 million people, with an unemployed level of 3 million. That is a reduction overall of 37 per cent. If we make comparisons between our manufacturing output and that of our major competitors——

Mr. Richards: The hon. Member has given some statistics of numbers of people employed in the manufacturing sector and how their number has fallen in this country. Can he identify any other modern industrial western country where the number of people employed in the manufacturing sector has not fallen during the 1980s?

Mr. Bruce: Not a large manufacturing country. As I said, I was coming back to that, but I drew the allusion nevertheless.

We have lost jobs, and they have to be replaced. I wholly accept that they cannot all be replaced by

manufacturing, but manufacturing has to create the growth and the wealth and the recovery to pay for the jobs to be created elsewhere. That is the fundamental point.

Comparative figures show that manufacturing output has increased in the United Kingdom between 1980 and 1990 by 2·1 per cent., as opposed to the OECD average of 2·9 per cent., so we have not been performing well by comparison with our competitors.

The President of the Board of Trade made considerable play, reinforced by some interventions from his Back Benchers, with the improvement in productivity. I wholly accept that. There has been an improvement in productivity, but there had to be, because of course we are operating from a much smaller base. For us to reap the full benefits of those improvements in productivity, we need to expand the manufacturing base, so that we can create more wealth to pay our way in the world.

I spent a couple of hours this morning in the City, visiting Lloyds. It was brought home to me there that many of our City institutions that still maintain substantial expertise and ability to turn around very substantial sums of money, to add value and make profit, nevertheless grew up at a time when we were an imperial power and had a captive market. We can only hold those markets if we maintain a competitive edge and the ability to provide added value and productivity that beats our competitors.

Our ability to sustain that and to provide full employment in that sector, the Secretary of State for Employment would have to acknowledge, is somewhat under question. The banks are shedding thousands of jobs. Employment fall-out in Lloyds itself is coming down the track. We see, right across the service sector, that it can neither sustain continued expansion in employment nor hold the jobs that have been created in recent years. So the conventional wisdom, which I think the Prime Minister was beginning to address, has to be challenged. The service sector will not be able to provide enough of the employment of the future or to provide the necessary wealth to create jobs.

It is worth pointing out in this context, taking up the point that I was returning to when the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) intervened, that it is clear that an expansion in manufacturing will not, of itself, create a huge increase in direct employment. I think it will, however, first provide quality employment, because it requires the application of considerable skills for which we have to improve our training, and it will provide the spin-off for the service sector which manufacturing industry itself employs. I argue that the indirect effect will be quite significant.

In the period when we came out of the last recession of the mid-1980s, during the years 1985 to 1987, companies employing fewer than 20 people accounted for 500,000 new jobs, while companies employing more than 20 people produced only 20,000 new jobs. When we are talking about manufacturing industry, we should be thinking not just about huge industrial complexes but about small manufacturing companies creating added value, applying skills, transferring technology and creating the means of expansion in both employment and wealth.

It is worth making comparisons with the two countries against which it is most important for us to mark our performance—Germany and Japan. We often make comparisons with America, which I think are completely wrong, because America is a big economy operating in a completely different framework. While it is culturally similar, the nature of the American economy is very dissimilar from ours. Germany and Japan are trading nations which have to generate external wealth to sustain their population with the kind of standard of living to which they aspire.

Contrary to popular belief, Japan is not a big business economy: it is a small business economy. One of its great strengths is the link between huge trading corporations and a massive network of small suppliers. The difference is that big business in Japan is the friend of small business, whereas too often in Britain it sees itself as in competition with small business, or is careless about the latter's interests, or does not pay its bills on time. It fails to co-operate in helping small businesses to advance. We should therefore look at ways of creating more positive relations between the two.

Similarly, in Germany, there is a relationship between the financial sector, manufacturers and investors which takes account of long-term needs. Hostile takeovers, a feature of British economic life, are almost unknown in Germany. Conservative Members are fond of saying that it is a good discipline for management to know that they can be taken over; but it also encourages short-termism. Long-term investment encourages hostile takeovers to raid the cash funds for short-term benefit.

We must find a way of getting around that, to enable companies to make long-term investments without putting themselves at risk. The City, the Government and industry should all explore this. For instance, the City should provide funds for specific needs at attractive rates for long-term investment. That should not be beyond the wit of the City. Nor should it be beyond the wit of the Treasury and the Chancellor if necessary to underpin such loans with tax incentives, which will accrue to long-term investments and which can accrue only if they remain long-term. They will be penalised if anyone tries to capitalise on them in the short term.

The antics displayed by the President of the Board of Trade are confusing. He is fond, when it suits him, of talking about intervention and telling us why he cannot, must not or should not intervene when it does not suit him to. There is no logic or consistency or strategy—no shred of forethought at all. The general impression is that the right hon. Gentleman is happy to get through another day without another catastrophe landing on his plate. We are entitled to something better.

After all, the right hon. Gentleman resigned from the Government because he wanted to intervene over Westland. Before he came to prominence, there were several conspicuous occasions when Tory Governments intervened to the benefit of our long-term manufacturing and industrial base. Had it not been for such interventions, there would be no Rolls-Royce and no Ferranti today. I do not see why we cannot have an honest assessment of the terms and conditions on which Tory Ministers might intervene.

The President of the Board of Trade, perhaps foreshadowing his White Paper on the pits inquiry, seemed to be preparing the ground for his escape from the recommendations of the Select Committee report. He started by saying that the market was the prime determinant. The Select Committee did not specifically deal with that, but I should like to ask the right hon. Gentleman how he thinks the nuclear power industry managed to secure 25 per cent. of the electricity generation

[Mr. Bruce]

market on free market principles. He well knows that the market has been distorted; there is no point in pretending otherwise.

Where do we go from here? The part of the President's speech dealing with the French interconnector was interesting, and we shall study it and return to it. I had understood that the interconnector was designed from the beginning to provide the opportunity for a flow of electricity to and from the continent, not just between the United Kingdom and France but to the European Community. All most of us want is the ability to make it a two-way process. If it were, it would release resources that could be provided for by coal. Whatever contractual terms the President of the Board of Trade is locked into, this country is buying subsidised French coal-fired electricity at the expense of our own. The British people find that hard to understand.

I attended the launch of the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance, of which the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) is chairman. I am happy to be associated with it. What we need now is a recognition cutting across party politics that we must have positive, strong and imaginative ideas to build a stronger manufacturing base. We need to leave behind sterile arguments about whether manufacturing creates more jobs than do the service industries, tourism or invisibles. We need all those things if this country is to survive. This debate is timely, in that at the moment our manufacturing sector is too small for Britain's fundamental economic needs. If we can all agree on that, we can start to do something about it.

If the Secretary of State for Employment is to answer this debate, I urge her to respond to it more constructively than the President of the Board of Trade did. We have the skills; we can make things; we can add value. If we do not do so, we will have no chance of conquering unemployment or of giving our people the standard of living which they have a right to expect and which we are still a long way from achieving.

6.45 pm

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): It is nearly 22 years since I first spoke in the House. I hope that all hon. Members will agree that, during that time, I have solidly, continuously and forcefully expressed my concern for manufacturing industry—a concern to identify and deal with its problems and to enable it to realise its potential both as a major employer and as the only sustainable source of non-inflationary economic growth.

Today I speak with a still greater mandate, because, as several hon. Members have already said, last week saw the launch of the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance, on which I have the honour to serve as chairman. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), the trade and industry spokesman for the Liberal Democrat party, for speaking from the platform on that occasion on behalf of his party.

I am also delighted to see in their places the hon. Members for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) and for Stockport (Ms. Coffey), who serve on the advisory panel of the alliance. The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) is also a member of the advisory panel. I agree with every word he uttered in support of the chemical industry and the pharmaceutical industry. If only Governments had used their influence, not necessarily to interfere with, but to involve themselves in, industry and to guide and help it, perhaps the severe erosion of our manufacturing base over the past 40 to 50 years would not have occurred.

The launch of the alliance, with messages of support from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the leader of the Liberal Democrat party and the Leader of the Opposition, is as unprecedented in its cross-party support as it is timely in its arrival. The alliance, which draws together Members from all political parties, leading figures from the City and key players from the manufacturing and construction industries—employers and employees—has already begun to make its presence felt.

I do not want to claim undue credit for the actions and statements of others, but I welcome today's debate, even if I have some reservations about the tone of the motion. I welcome even more the commitment to manufacturing that the Prime Minister showed in his highly publicised interview last week. Coincidentally, he gave that interview the day after the alliance was launched and he had received all the papers about the launch.

Throughout the time I have served in the House, successive Governments of all political hues have failed to appreciate the true importance of our manufacturing industry. Too few hon. Members have real experience of those industries, and too great a concentration of effort and attention has been placed on the service sector to the detriment of our manufacturing base.

I have some regret about the way in which the debate has gone so far. The two Front-Bench speeches appeared to be entirely party political point scoring, with few positive proposals about how our manufacturing base might be expanded and strengthened. However, after those opening speeches, we had a positive and useful contribution from the right hon. Member for Halton.

I pay tribute also to my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe). I was surprised—I do not say that in a patronising way—at his thoughtful and considered speech. It is to be hoped that the Secretary of State for Employment takes back to all the Ministers concerned—not just at the Departments of Employment and of Trade and Industry but at the Treasury, the Department for Education and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Department—the pertinent views of my hon. Friend.

I hope that party political polemics will be put aside for the remainder of the debate and that Conservative and Opposition Members will concentrate on seeking to find common ground which can be exploited to establish and implement new policies that will give constructive benefits to our most important industries. Our economic and employment opportunities could be sustained, but the belief that they could be sustained without a manufacturing base has been exposed, and widely accepted, as the absurdity it always was.

Unemployment is likely to remain at around the 3 million mark for some time, the balance of payments deficit continues to grow and we are an uncompetitive nation in an increasingly tough and competitive world. As our manufacturing base has contracted, our balance of trade deficit has increased proportionately. The issue must be grasped by Government.

I do not, however, want to fall into the trap of pointing the finger at the present Government for all the evils of our economy now. That would be as unfair as it would be

unhelpful. As has been pointed out, we are in a world recession. Successive Governments of both parties have failed to deal effectively with the forces that led to the steady erosion of our manufacturing base.

Let us hope that this debate begins to see the turning of the tide and that what is said by hon. Members in all parts of the House will be studied carefully by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the President of the Board of Trade, the Secretary of State for Employment, who is in her place, and by Foreign Office Ministers. Between them, they have a combined responsibility for identifying the problems that our industries are facing and for bringing forward constructive and positive solutions to help manufacturers to make better goods more efficiently and to sell them abroad to earn the revenue that Britain needs.

With the Budget looming and the constraint that I should not stray too widely from the subject of the motion, the House will find it helpful if I take the opportunity to put on the record the measures that the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance believes should be considered for incorporation in the Budget statement on which the Chancellor is undoubtedly working.

The measures that I put to the House are as simple as they are essential. First, we wish to see the introduction of 100 per cent. capital allowances to ensure that the investment decisions of industry are not distorted by the tax regime. Secondly, we wish to see a commitment to reducing still further, and to holding down, interest rates, which have placed intolerable burdens on industry and home owners alike. Thirdly, we wish to see the abolition of stamp duty on the sale of houses. That archaic tax is a dampener on the housing market and should be excised immediately from the list of what I describe as acceptable tax measures.

Fourthly, we wish to see the creation of a task force to identify and tackle areas that offer considerable potential for import substitution. I have discussed the matter with the Prime Minister, who is extremely sympathetic to that sort of exercise being undertaken. Fifthly, we want a more favourable tax treatment of the fees that individuals pay to improve their qualifications and skills through part-time education. Sixthly, we want a firm and explicit political commitment to promote British exports through all the means at the disposal of the Government.

It is no good the Government saying that they are doing a lot in that area when—my right hon. Friend the former Minister for Trade, who is now the Minister for Industry, and who I am glad to see on the Front Bench, knows this well—the rates given in this country by the Export Credits Guarantee Department are nowhere near as competitive as those available in France or Germany. Our exporters are operating at a disadvantage. Those are all measures within the short-term gift of the Government. They are needed and would receive a welcome from industry, the City and from most, if not all, hon. Members.

In a message at the launch of the alliance, the Prime Minister said:

> "I am sure that the Alliance will argue the case for manufacturing industry with vigour in the years ahead. I look forward to its dialogue with Government in this important cause."

My comments today represent the first contribution of the alliance to the dialogue for which the Prime Minister called.

Mr. Dennis Turner (Wolverhampton, South-East): I intervene on behalf of the west midlands. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that my constituents and I would rest easier if tomorrow he were given the opportunity to implement the proposals he has put to the House by being appointed President of the Board of Trade? We in the west midlands have had a third of our manufacturing base eroded. In my constituency, over 20 per cent. of the working population—good, able-bodied men and women—are available to make a contribution to society. My area was built up on manufacturing. The policies that the hon. Gentleman outlined should be implemented. I hope that the Prime Minister will see the wisdom of giving him the opportunity to implement them——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Member knows my views on interventions. His is becoming a speech.

Mr. Winterton: It may have been long, but from my point of view it was most welcome, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As he knows, I have supported from the Conservative Benches some of the points that he has made at Question Time and on other occasions. When his suggestions deserve merit, as they often do, I shall continue to support them.

As the hon. Member for Gordon said, it is important for hon. Members in all parts of the House to try to find common ground on which to take forward the cause of manufacturing industry. Having worked for many years in the Birmingham area, in the west midlands, the black country, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Stourbridge—I could go on naming the places—in the construction industry, I appreciate how important manufacturing industry is to that part of the world. There are the skills—the willing and trained people in that area—to form an important part of the renaissance of manufacturing industry in this country.

I hope that our proposals will be given careful and sympathetic consideration, because they are constructive and positive, and that they will be taken to all the Ministries concerned.

I have one other suggestion for consideration. It is that Ministers should look again at the provisions for dealing with the affairs of businesses that run into financial difficulties. Our current provisions seem to propel far too many businesses with short-term problems towards and beyond the brink of liquidation, when a more constructive approach might have averted such a result. We need the administrative equivalent, not of the undertaker, which too often the liquidator is, but of a paramedic task force, which, when a business hits troubled waters, can provide immediate advice and help in finding a way to keep that business trading and so avoid unnecessary liquidations, loss of jobs and knock-on effects on creditors.

Nobody, except perhaps the liquidator, benefits from the current situation. Many hon. Members have expressed their understandable concern that our system appears to be biased against survival, and would welcome a commitment by the Government to consider introducing arrangements perhaps not dissimilar to those available in the United States, where companies can file for chapter 11 status and be subject to a task force type investigation to keep them on their feet. Too many companies have the rug pulled for the wrong reason, when a little advice and slightly longer-term support would keep them going and maintain the jobs.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my hon. Friend accept that the British system of receivership allows many businesses to survive and prosper despite having short-term financial problems?

Mr. Winterton: There is some truth in what my hon. Friend has said, but I must tell the House from my contacts with many sectors of industry that people do not believe that the present system helps the company to survive, particularly if it is a private company, because the proprietors are immediately excluded from any management situation and on-going contact with the company.

I wish to put it on the record that last week I was joined at the launch of the alliance by the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Francis McWilliams, Mr. John Edmonds, the general secretary of the GMB, one of the largest unions in the country, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), who speaks for the Opposition on trade and industry matters, the hon. Member for Gordon, who speaks for the Liberal Democratic party, and many leading figures from British industry.

We came together with common cause because we believe that the complacency of previous years towards our industries has done real and lasting harm; because we are convinced that urgent remedial action is necessary; and because we believe in making things happen rather than sitting idly by and fiddling while Rome burns.

Taking up one matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne, I should mention that another of the people on the platform at the launch of the alliance was Mr. Bob Worcester, the chairman of MORI polls. He had undertaken a survey for the alliance of 1,000 university students and I wonder whether hon. Members know the favoured career for which they opted. [HON. MEMBERS: "Lawyer? Engineer?"] No, not a lawyer and not an engineer. We should not be having these sedentary interventions, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that was not really a rhetorical question. I will give the answer to the House: journalism and broadcasting was the favoured career for people in higher education. I think that that is shocking.

Let us hope that in this debate the spokesmen for all political parties and all the Back-Bench Members will seek to lay the foundation for a new cultural and political consensus which places the needs, the problems and the potential of these critical manufacturing and construction industries firmly on the parliamentary agenda of our country, and that we begin to act with one heart and one mind in our determination to prevent the further erosion of our manufacturing base.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I call the next hon. Member, I remind the House that between now and 9 pm there will be a limit of 10 minutes on speeches, and that it will be strictly observed.

7.4 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): Even in a 10-minute spell, it is worth taking a few seconds to congratulate the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on the launch of his alliance. I will attempt to join that alliance, as I have several other alliances in which he has played a part.

I agree with the hon. Member for Macclesfield that the speech by the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) was very able. It was one with which I heartily agreed. My only embarrassment was that I had not made a similar speech some years ago, because I owed it to the engineering industry. He must come from an engineering background; I suspect that perhaps his father was an engineer and spoon-fed him.

I take note of what the hon. Member for Macclesfield said about trying to get an alliance, particularly from the Back Benches. We should not, in the space of 10 minutes, start referring to the frailties of the present Government.

I want to speak mainly about my constituency, which is, or at least used to be, a manufacturing constituency. We need look no further than Kilmarnock and Loudoun, which is in Ayrshire, to see the disastrous effects of the Government's economic policies.

Kilmarnock has had the dubious problem of a heavy dependency on manufacturing industry and more than one third of the district's employed people still work in that industry. I say "dubious" because I believe that we are all agreed that a really healthy economy that produces wealth is one with a solid manufacturing base. It is ironic that we are seeing the vestiges of Kilmarnock's once-healthy manufacturing base being eroded yet again. There is no sign of the economy improving in Scotland and in Kilmarnock in particular. In fact, for whatever reason, we are now seeing the ravages of a new form of economic decline and are losing jobs.

I say that we have a manufacturing base which is now a problem, because manufacturing is so threatened as to make Kilmarnock a highly insecure place with regard to employment. It is threatened in a number of ways.

Many of our industries are threatened, first, because of the direct, unfair competition from cheap imports. That is something which the Government must look at very closely. One of the traditional manufacturing industries in Kilmarnock is shoes. We have the Kilmarnock Shoe Company, which used to be Saxones; it used to employ over 800 people, but that has now reduced to something like 226 and will drop to about 187 because the company is having to shed workers. The main cause is the cheap imports coming into the country from China, where poverty wages are paid to adults and children are exploited in the most appalling conditions. That appears to be one of the direct causes of the loss of jobs in the shoe industry and it is something which Government Departments should be examining and stopping.

There is also the carpet-making industry, in which there are famous names in Kilmarnock. There is BMK, which is now only a shadow of its former self, but nevertheless, having modernised, is able to compete with the carpet manufacturing industry in Europe. But even in this field there are imports, from Belgium in particular. Their wages are comparable with ours and their productivity records are no better than ours, yet somehow the carpets can be brought into this country and sold more cheaply. I suspect that somewhere there are hidden Government subsidies and we either have to do the same for our carpet manufacturers or see that Belgium stops applying subsidies.

One of our best employers in Kilmarnock, of which I have often spoken in the House, is Johnny Walker, with the biggest and most modern bottling shed in the world. The company employs up to 800 people. I ask Conservative Back Benchers to have a word in the Chancellor's ear, because tax of £5·60 on a bottle of whisky is a disgrace. It is not a case of not increasing the

tax in the Budget: the tax should be decreased substantially, so that Scotch whisky can compete favourably in European markets with other spirits.

We have a new trade with people taking wagons to Europe to fill with cheap booze. The axles on the cars cannot take the weight of the spirits that are being brought from the continent because of the low tax on alcohol, and particularly on whisky. We should not accept conditions in which a bottle of whisky in France, or in Italy is £2·50 cheaper than where it is made. I want to see whisky being sold at the same price in Kilmarnock as it is in France, so that all of us may benefit from the spirit of life.

Because of problems in the service sector, I am increasingly being contacted by small companies threatened by cash flow problems when creditors cannot pay on time or are themselves faced with bankruptcy. The example I quote is the collapse of the biggest building company in Scotland, Lilley plc. It is an extraordinary affair. The four departments of Lilley collapsed on a Friday and reopened under a different name on Monday, with all its debts being left with the smaller companies.

One company in my constituency which was owed £38,000 by Lilley went under because the banks foreclosed on it. Because Lilley went into receivership, 60 jobs in my constituency were lost. Lilley was able to reopen on the Monday but the 60 jobs were lost because the cash which should have come from Lilley was not there. That should not be possible in a modern society.

The Government Departments which I contacted, Customs and Excise and PAYE, were most helpful in extending the time for payment. After I had negotiated an additional year for the firm to pay its VAT, the bank suggested that it should push for even more time. I told the firm to go back and ask the bank to honour its agreement and, instead of cutting the overdraft, to give the firm more financial assistance so that the VAT could be paid.

Banks in Scotland are not playing the game with small businesses. They are foreclosing on them far too soon or are restricting their cash flow, with the result that many small companies are being squeezed out of business. Perhaps Ministers could have a word with bankers who are doing that, particularly in Scotland.

Farming has faced many difficulties over the years. The hill livestock compensatory allowance was designed to compensate farmers in areas like my constituency. Recent cuts in the allowance have severely weakened the competitive position of farmers in the market for lamb. In conjunction with the report of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, backed by the Government, which proposes the break-up of the Scottish Milk Marketing Board and the Potato Marketing Board, both of which operated efficiently, the picture which emerges is of a Government with few ideas and even less ability. I hope that my comments will be noted by the Minister and acted upon.

7.13 pm

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): I am glad to have been called to take part in the debate because my family firm, established in 1845, supplied coal and then oil to the great woollen mills in the west riding. My grandfather was also called John Sykes. He joined the firm in 1914, taking it on to greater things. None of his friends could understand why he always travelled second class on the train from Slaithwaite to Huddersfield, until he told them that it was because there was not a third class.

We have survived, despite Labour Governments. These days we manufacture in Filey, near my constituency in Scarborough. I recommend the area to any prospective employer, at home or abroad, who may be listening. Let us make no mistake, many will be looking in on the debate. What will they make of the Labour party? Will they come to the conclusion that of all countries, ours is the one to be avoided at all costs? That is the message, for political reasons alone, which the little Jeremiahs on the Opposition Benches are peddling.

That is hardly surprising, coming as it does from a party many of whose members would sooner take from the church poor box than stand up for their country. This is the Labour party which crippled manufacturing industry with inflation rates which would have made even a south American banker reach for his pacemaker. This is the Labour party which hated manufacturers with such venom that it wanted to make the pips squeak.

While on the subject of pipsqueaks, I am old enough to remember the last Labour Government. Opposition Members have the gall to complain about manufacturing today. I recall several leading and distinguished members of the Labour party, including even members of the Labour Cabinet, parading on picket lines during the 1970s, in the full glare of the international press, telling the world what they thought of their country and of manufacturing industry.

I recall that this was the Labour party which brought us the winter of discontent. As long as I draw breath, I shall never forget that winter, having to go before a strike committee in Barnsley in 1979 to beg it on bended knee to allow oil deliveries through to Redfearns National Glass because, without fuel, its kilns would have cooled and cracked and thousands in Barnsley would have been thrown out of work.

Yet the motion talks of a coherent strategy and measures to reduce unemployment. As long as I draw breath, I shall never forget the tanker driver who came to me in tears because his wife and family had received threats because he had driven through a secondary picket line. *[Interruption.]* I am in no mood to take lessons from the little Castros on the Opposition Benches, most of whom would not know a business if it jumped up and slapped them in the face. Most of them are teachers or lecturers and most of whom are sponsored by unions.

Let us take, for example, the Opposition spokesman on manufacturing, the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). That city expanded out of recognition during the 1980s as a result of Conservative policies. The hon. Gentleman was busy lecturing on the subject of industrial relations at Leeds university between 1971 and 1983. Is he aware of the tremendous trouble to which my company had to go, because of secondary picketing, to supply Leeds university with heating oil? If he is not, perhaps it is the first recorded case in history of the left hand not knowing what the left hand was doing.

This is the Labour party which is dying to bring in the 48-hour week. Labour Members know, or should know, that it would cost thousands of jobs. They should know that manufacturers need to work when the work is there, not when some Greek Commissioner says that it is there. This is the Labour party that pines for the social chapter, when its members know that even Jacques Delors says that

[Mr. John Sykes]

it will make Great Britain a paradise for investment. Even the Fred Flintstones on the Opposition Benches acknowledge that investment equals jobs.

This is the Labour party that yearns to squeeze jobs out of industry with a minimum wage, a policy which has destroyed whole industries in France. The Labour party strains at the leash to cast away all our trade union reforms and longs for the return of flying pickets. This is the Labour party of closed shops and closed minds. Above all, this is a Labour party not even up to the task of the debate, a party for whom Opposition Supply day debates are the only certainty in its twilight days.

7.18 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): If I had been a member of the strike committee before which the hon. Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) appeared to ask for a dispensation to run his wagons through to Barnsley, he probably would not have got it after a speech like that.

I shall concentrate on unemployment in my constituency. The Government's figure for unemployment, based on those who are claiming benefit, exceeds 3 million. If we add trainees and people who do not claim benefit, the true figure is about 4·5 million. That is one in 10 of the work force. That unemployment costs £9,000 per person, or about £27 billion a year—money that should be used by the Government to create jobs and produce the tax revenue that the country needs.

About 800,000 unemployed people are under the age of 25, and most of those young people have never had a job. They have been shunted from one training scheme to another with no prospect of permanent employment. The Government have told us again that low inflation, low interest rates and other factors are now in place for recovery. Where is the recovery that the President of the Board of Trade and the Prime Minister have promised for so many years? I agree that inflation and interest rates are low, but unemployment is still extremely high.

Nobody has any confidence in the Government's ability to get people back to work. Unfortunately, my constituency fares worse than the national average. Unemployment there has risen by 1,000 since the President of the Board of Trade opened his mouth in October about colliery closures. In my constituency, 12,500 people are registered as unemployed. That is 12·6 per cent., but the 1991 census gives a more accurate figure and shows that 15,000 or 15 per cent. of people are out of work.

I visited my jobcentres on Friday and discovered that one office, which deals with 8,000 claimants out of the total of 12,500, has only 90 vacancies at any one time. For the whole of Barnsley, there are 185 vacancies at any one time. That is one job for every 67 people who are out of work, compared with the national ratio of one job for every 29 people. In that office, I looked at the most recent vacancy on computer to discover the wages on offer. The clothing industry is a major employer in my constituency, after the demise of coal, and offers part-time female employment. According to the computer, an experienced garment presser was being offered £105 for a 37-hour week. That amount was not being offered to a kid on the dole, a school leaver or a part-time worker: it was for an experienced garment presser. A wage of £105 a week is a disgrace.

In January, 111 industrial vacancies were advertised in the press, while for the standard occupational sector 115 vacancies were advertised. Last month people, who had been unemployed for a long time lobbied Parliament. One of my constituents on that lobby has written more than 1,000 letters in an attempt to get a job. He has been writing since April last year, but has had no success because no jobs are available.

What are the immediate prospects? I am told by my economic development association that things could be looking up. A company called Michigan Clothing has 30 vacancies, Haywood and Padgett has 12 and ITC (UK) Ltd. has five. Hill Meyer Alan Design has won a contract for £150,000-worth of work and may offer 50 to 60 jobs in the near future. However, pit closures will mean that in October we shall lose 6,000 jobs at the two collieries in my area. That should be set against the 50 to 60 jobs that will be offered by the companies that I have mentioned. I am grateful for those jobs and wish that there were more on the way.

I congratulate my local chamber of commerce, whose members I met here last week, on organising Interprise 1993. Employers from all over Europe have been invited to that conference in Barnsley and the chamber has said that it will introduce producers in my constituency to similar companies in Europe to try to make something of the single market.

I listened with interest to the statement within the speech of the President of the Board of Trade about British Coal. In it, he again decried every suggestion by the Select Committee on Energy and other informed bodies on a way out of the coal crisis. Because of revenue support grant capping, my local authority has to cut £11 million from its budget. So far, that has meant 350 redundancies, closures of residential homes and the prospect of further redundancies. The economic development unit has to make a 38 per cent. cut, although that unit is doing much to attract the jobs to which I have referred. That massive cut is also due to problems with the revenue support grant.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) spoke about carpet manufacturing in his area. A carpet company in my constituency announced 65 redundancies in January out of a work force of about 300, because there is no demand in the economy for the company's products. One of the companies for which I used to work, Quilter Hall and Company, an engineering company which has been established for over 100 years and which manufactures mining equipment and rolling stock, tried to win a contract in India as part of a consortium with NEI and an Indian company. The contract was to build parts of power stations in India, a country that the Prime Minister recently visited. Quilter Hall tells me that it cannot win the contract because of unfair competition.

A company called ABB, which is competing with the consortium, was allowed to re-tender after the Quilter Hall consortium beat ABB on not only price but quality and specifications. Quilter Hall offered better specifications and price, but the Indians clearly want ABB to win the contract. Even the second re-tender price is higher than that offered by the Quilter Hall/NEI consortium.

Quilter Hall has lost £40,000 tendering for that contract. It is struggling for survival, but last year it completely retooled its fitting shop, boiler shop and fabrication shop, and ceased production of mining equipment, for which there is no demand, to build

locomotives for the channel tunnel. It beat every manufacturer in the country on specifications and is now building those locomotives for the channel tunnel project —if that project ever comes to fruition. What is the President of the Board of Trade doing about that tender?

Where is the intervention that we hear so much about? Who is helping the Quilter Hall/NEI consortium to win the Indian contract? That consortium can win it fairly and does not want any underhand assistance, but when its tender is the best it should be chosen.

About 18 months ago, the Barnsley Canister company, a premier manufacturer of tinplate canisters, went bust when a company called CMB Packaging bought its order book and closed the factory. It was asset-stripped simply for the order book. When are we to have the intervention that will create jobs in areas such as mine?

7.29 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I support the Government's amendment and take cognisance of the greatly improved confidence within industry, as highlighted by the Institute of Directors and the CBI—representing as I do a constituency with a higher proportion of manufacturing jobs than in the country as a whole and having myself worked in manufacturing industry.

I am quietly confident that there are opportunities for manufacturing industry now which have not been available for the past 10 years. I say that, first, because there is evidence that British manufacturing industry is competitive. Exports are up to record levels compared with last year, running even now at £9 billion per month. There has been an improvement in retail sales, and even an improvement during the past eight weeks in house sales, which show an increase of some 20 per cent. over last year. I am cautiously optimistic that, provided that we have the right kind of Budget, that will improve.

I believe that British manufacturing industry stands on the threshold of significant improvements in competitiveness while other countries are losing competitiveness, first, because inward investment is dramatic and at its highest ever levels. The Japanese do not put 41 per cent. of their investment in Europe just because they like the look of us. They do it because they believe that Britain can be more competitive than elsewhere in the EC.

The OECD, in its latest report, talked about the resilence of investment, and of spending on research and development in Britain during the recession. Productivity in manufacturing has continued, almost uniquely in the recession, to increase. In October and November, it increased on average by about 6·3 per cent., which is the best since the best years in the 1980s.

Possibly most important of all, attitudes among people involved in business, the work force, as it used to be called, and management—thank heavens the distinction is now reducing—have become much more flexible and co-operative. A recent survey by Birmingham business school found that only 15 per cent. of manual male workers in Europe worked more than 45 hours a week, while in Britain it was 38 per cent. Therefore, the idea of a British disease and problems with industrial relations is now well and truly buried.

Also significant was the fact, discovered by the CBI, that the value added by British workers when a foreign investor came here was no less than 46 per cent. greater than it was for indigenous British companies. That shows the flexibility that British workers can show when good management comes in from overseas. Rover has recently been able to show the benefits of changing the role of shop floor workers between sales and manufacturing functions. Former shop floor workers have sold no fewer than 3,000 vehicles in a new range in six weeks—an average of 500 cars a week.

Lemmerz, the biggest German wheelmaker, has decided to move its wheel-making capacity from just outside Bonn to my constituency because it recognises that British costs, competitiveness and workers can produce the goods better than the Germans. It told me that, as a result of the social costs with which the Germans have burdened themselves, 80 per cent. has to be added to the average wage cost, compared with only 35 per cent. in Britain—hence the large movement in investment from Europe to Britain.

Those improvements in productivity will translate into more sales and more jobs only in the medium term. Germany lost 3·3 per cent. of its output last year and Japan lost 8·5 per cent., while the United Kingdom lost just under 1 per cent. Similarly, the proportion in manufacturing industry has dropped, too. In Britain during the past 10 years, it dropped from 26 to 20 per cent. of the work force, in Germany from 41 to 28 per cent. and in Japan from 36 to 29 per cent.

It is estimated that, as manufacturing output has fallen, half of manufacturing workers today are in service jobs. General Motors receives about one fifth of its revenue from the service industry. The Engineering Employers Federation recognises that, between 1982 and 1991, the increase in demand for goods in Britain was about 16 per cent.—that was from the general public, the consumer whom we all serve—while the increase in demand for services was no less than 55 per cent. That is one reason why the number of people employed in services is increasing compared with those in manufacturing.

Nevertheless, despite the improvements in manufacturing productivity during the past few years, we still face a challenge. That was recognised by the CBI in the document that it sent round only today, in which it talks about the United Kingdom still not being internationally competitive. Whatever measure one takes, we are significantly less competitive than the United States and slightly less competitive than the Germans.

How are we to respond to that challenge? It will not be by imbibing the inflexibilities that are connected with the social chapter or the minimum wage, or with an alien attitude towards inward investment—all attitudes shared by the Opposition. Nor will it be an obsession that manufacturing efficiency and competitiveness in the long term can be assured by bunging subsidies into individual companies. We did that when, as taxpayers, we wrote off £750 million in DAF. Sadly, that investment did not do it much good in the long term.

What the Government can do—what I should like to see done—is to make greater use of straight line investment allowances in order to allow industry to write off its capital investment much more quickly than at present. I am not a believer in 100 per cent. capital investment allowances on a permanent basis, because that distorts investment decisions and anyway is an inefficient use of taxpayers' money. However, on a straight line basis, it could be a good thing.

I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs is in charge of reducing regulations. One of the first things he could

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consider is VAT inspectors who somehow consider that they have a role as private amateur detectives. I was in a company yesterday which said that it had had forcibly to remove one VAT inspector from its premises because he was so objectionable.

I should like a big increase in one-stop shops. I do not see why they should be run by the training and enterprise councils. Most important of all for the carpet industry is more rigorous monitoring of international standards to ensure that we compete on a level playing field. After five years, despite the ruling of the European Court, the Belgian Government have not been repaid £5 million of illegal subsidies by their biggest carpet manufacturer. There is now evidence that the Walloon regional government has slipped its second largest carpet manufacturer—my constituency has a large number of carpet manufacturers—no less than £6 million in illegal subsidies. If Maastricht is to mean anything at all, it should mean better monitoring in order to take action against such nonsense.

The best way in which the Government could improve the lot of manufacturing industry is by getting out of its way, reducing regulations, reducing taxation and ensuring that inflation is as low as possible, thus allowing industry to become competitive and the British people, with their entrepreneurial spirit, to make their way and thereby retake world markets.

It is no coincidence at all that, during the past 10 years and irrespective of the recession, our present share of world trade has at last started to increase again. It is the result of those policies during the past 10 years.

7.38 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): There has been universal praise for the speech by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), but the speech by the Secretary of State was one of the most outrageous cynicism. It was full of devices and diversions, but it contained no policy, no hope and no relevance. It was massive in its cheek and tawdry in its vision.

The Prime Minister should adopt a national strategy for economic recovery, and the right hon. Gentleman should encourage the core industry of steel and the highly skilled aerospace industry. I want Britain's 3 million unemployed to be placed at the very top of the political agenda. There is no national future without a strong manufacturing base—manufacturing industry is wealth.

Tens of thousands of jobs are being lost in the aerospace industry. The airbus is a case in point. A factory in my constituency makes the wings for the airbus, but I regret to tell the House that it announced 470 job losses only this week. Apprentices are not to be retained, notwithstanding the wonderful training they were given, and no more apprenticeships are on offer. White collar and blue collar suffer alike. That is a wounding blow, and the whole economy is shocked.

Last week, I attended a roll-out ceremony in Hamburg of the new A321 airbus. In one of the largest hangars that I know, 3,000 people—some of them my constituents—acclaimed that triumph of aeronautical engineering. However, those of my constituents who work at the local factory returned home to Wales to be informed of the job losses. Those jobs are among the finest and most important in world manufacturing.

The recession apart, President Clinton is threatening the future of the airbus. At the headquarters of the Boeing corporation in Seattle, he told a cheering work force that he meant business against the Europeans. In effect, he played to the Boeing gallery. He should have made a speech along these lines: "Gentlemen of Boeing, the airbus project is not only your most vigorous competitor but technically superior to the aircraft you make. Airbus is knocking lumps out of Boeing."

The Prime Minister should remind President Clinton that Boeing and McDonnell Douglas have received up to $41 million of indirect subsidies since 1976, first from the Defence Department, then from NASA. The Prime Minister should remind him also that British Aerospace has received only £700 million of launch aid, and has already repaid a large amount of that from sales.

I want the Prime Minister, with Britain's manufacturing future in mind, to insist that the United States keeps to the letter of the airbus agreement, and tell President Clinton that he should back off making threats about the airbus, which represents the best of futures for Britain's manufacturing industry. It is the privilege of the Prime Minister to fight for and to defend the airbus.

Also made in my constituency is BAe's world-famous 125 corporate jet, but the work force for that wonderful aircraft are perplexed. The corporate jet headquarters is now registered in Little Rock, Arkansas—the home of the President of the United States. The British work force are proud of their work in making a world-beating aircraft at the Broughton factory, but they are anxious about the 125's long-term future.

I can do no better than quote the works convener, Mike Nesbitt:

> "Indications are that, in the near future, a large part of the business will transfer to the new 125 Jet headquarters in President Clinton's Arkansas, with resulting loss of British jobs."

I should like a Minister to comment on that. My constituents are helping Britain to make magnificent goods, and is generating earnings from abroad by the making of them. My constituents would like to have their anxieties dispelled.

If we allow the country's manufacturing industry to whither away, we shall be in dire national trouble. We will be unable to fund the welfare state. We know that already £100 billion of North sea revenues have been squandered by successive Conservative Administrations since 1979. In the early 1980s, some 20 per cent. of the nation's manufacturing capacity went to the wall. Officially—although this total is disputed—the number unemployed stands at 3 million. In Wales since 1979, 220,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost. In Wales, the construction industry also is reeling.

Britain, Wales and my constituency need a Government who have a national strategy to save what is left of the country's manufacturing industry.

7.46 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): The hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) has never been a good forecaster. When he addressed the House on national health reforms in the late 1980s, he forecast mayhem, yet those reforms proved to be a great success—*[Interruption.]*

Opposition Members laugh. They forget that many more patients are treated now than five years ago and that doctors have achieved the targets that the hon. Member for Livingston said could not be achieved.

In a more light-hearted vein, I am told that the only people to benefit from the hon. Gentleman's racing forecasts in the Glasgow *Herald* are the bookmakers, because he nearly always gets them wrong. He certainly got it wrong this evening. The hon. Gentleman turns out to be an old-fashioned protectionist who believes that the industries of the 1940s and the 1950s will ensure prosperity in the 21st century.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) complained about unemployment in his constituency. That was particularly rum, coming from a member of a party which at the last general election wanted to legislate 2 million people into unemployment by introducing a national minimum wage, and would deter inward investment by imposing the social chapter and frustrating the passage of the European Communities (Amendment) Bill.

Labour Members are suffering from collective amnesia. They forget the situation that existed in 1979. Britain's most important manufacturing sector is the automobile industry. In 1979, it was overmanned and over-subsidised, and its industrial relations were so bad that Red Robbo, rather than management, ruled British Leyland. It suffered also from the special car tax. Today, British Leyland's industrial relations have been transformed, special car tax has been abolished, and the British car industry looks forward to being a net exporter again. In February, there was a 16 per cent. increase in new car sales in this country. That is the measure of the transformation, which Labour should support rather than condemn.

Steel is another vital part of our manufacturing base. In 1979, it was nationalised, overmanned and over-subsidised, and among the lame ducks of the European steel industries. Today, it is in the private sector and is regarded as the most efficient steel industry in western Europe. Labour does not understand industry, the process of economic change, and the fact that a market economy is the main engine of economic and social growth. Indeed, Labour Members do not support or understand the market economy. When talking about the market, they seem to imply that it is like a second-hand car boot sale: they simply do not understand that it represents the only way in which to secure growth. Socialism is not the way in which to secure growth.

Let us look at what has happened to our country since 1979. Let us examine all the great industrial changes that have taken place since then, generating greater prosperity for our people. All those changes have been opposed by the Labour party. What has Labour done about industrial relations? When Bills have been presented to improve industrial relations, what have Labour Members said? Have they said that such Bills will create more jobs, or encourage inward investment? Of course not: they are in hock to their paymasters, and they do what their paymasters say, not what the country needs. They have voted against those Bills, seeking to frustrate the Government; they are not concerned about industrial relations in this country.

Hon. Members: Who pays you?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I cannot allow general conversations across the Floor.

Mr. Marshall: I am told that not enough people pay my party. Perhaps the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) would like to give us some names. Then we can ask the organisations concerned whether they will give us some money: I suspect that we need it.

One of the greatest developments since 1979 has been the process of privatisation, which took place in the face of Labour opposition. That great concept has now been copied throughout the western world, in the former communist countries and in Australia, where even the Labour party supports it. The only party in the world that opposes it is the British Labour party, which cannot understand the huge surge in prosperity and investment in formerly socialist industries.

What does Labour want to do to the successful privatised industries to encourage them to become more efficient and successful, and to generate more jobs? It wants to impose a special levy on their profits. Would that do anything for investment in British Steel, British Telecom or Cable and Wireless? Of course it would not. Labour would cut off investment in BT, Cable and Wireless and the water industry, all in the name of socialism—and that is what it calls part of a job-creating package. It is not a job-creating package; it is a job-destroying package.

The record of the privatised companies is first rate. In 1979 British Airways was losing hundreds of millions of pounds, and could not care less about the consumer. No wonder that today, in the private sector, it is the world's favourite airline. Since becoming part of the private sector, British Telecom has increased investment by over 50 per cent., and has also increased productivity: now it is one of the most efficient telecommunications companies, whereas in 1979 it was not. In 1979, the quality of BT's service was second-rate everywhere; today it is first-rate, because BT is in the private sector, and faces competition that it would never have faced without privatisation.

Privatisation transformed whole swathes of British industry: every time an industry was privatised, however, it was privatised in the face of opposition from Labour.

Another great movement over the past 10 years has been investment by Japan and the United States, which has transformed large sectors of our economy. We are now net exporters of television sets, and are becoming net exporters of motor cars, simply because of our success in encouraging new industries to come to Britain. Labour does not understand what encourages such investment. First, we have a low-tax economy; secondly, we are part of the European community. If we had listened to Labour in 1983, we would have walked out of the Community.

Those companies come to Britain for another reason: they know that the social chapter will not be imposed on them here for as long as we have a Conservative Government. They know that they will enjoy the benefit of the single market without the obligations that are imposed on industries in France, Germany, Italy and Spain. That is why Hoover went from Dijon to Cambuslang, and Digital went from Galway to Ayr. Hon. Members should recognise and welcome that, and condemn a political party that seeks to destroy the United Kingdom's attractiveness to inward investors. Every Japanese and American company that comes here creates jobs, and helps the balance of payments.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the balance of payments. Our balance of payments is £20 billion in the red. What has happened?

Mr. Marshall: I think that that figure contains an element of exaggeration. Let me remind the hon. Gentleman that inward investment has enabled this country to become a net exporter of television sets, and to become a net exporter of motor cars once more. I am proud of the fact that Nissan cars, manufactured in Britain, sell in Tokyo; the hon. Gentleman should be proud of it, too. It represents the rejuvenation of British manufacturing industry that the present Government have brought about.

7.55 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): I want to talk about the north-east. The hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) cited successful companies such as Nissan; it should be pointed out that Nissan was given tens of millions of pounds to build a factory in the north-east. That was nothing more than a subsidy for a private company—albeit Japanese—to come to the area.

I do not decry Nissan; it has been a success and is producing cars very cheaply. One of my worries relates to unemployment in the north and in my constituency in particular. The unemployment rate in the north is one of the highest in the United Kingdom and I am concerned about the current trend. I have examined the figures carefully. After the closure of the colliery where I had worked for 27 years, I was unemployed for 12 months, so I have some experience of unemployment. I can tell the House that it is not very nice: it is not pretty, signing on for the dole every week and trying to find work when there is none to be had.

The increase in unemployment is worrying. In the north-east, there has been an 81 per cent. increase since 1979; since 1990, there has been an increase of 32 per cent. Although the area has experienced some success since 1979, there has been a steady increase in unemployment. With the start of the recession of the 1990s, the position has worsened.

Since 1990, there has been a 30 per cent. increase in unemployment among the under-25s in the north-east. In the long term, the position is even worse: unemployment has risen by 49 per cent. since 1990. Manufacturing output has fallen by only 38 per cent. since 1979, but there has still been a great increase in unemployment. Why has there been such a large increase in unemployment, when manufacturing has not suffered to such a great extent?

In my constituency, 33 per cent. of the unemployed population have been unemployed for a year or more. I asked the local employment office whether that was the highest figure that it had ever had. The manager said that since he had been there, there the figure had never been as high. A trend is developing, so I was surprised that the President of the Board of Trade did not even mention unemployment in his speech. He was just one bag of wind, talking about nothing but himself.

Engineering manufacturing has dropped by 11 per cent. in the north-east. We have heard tonight that the outlook for the miners is not very rosy, especially in the north-east. Many engineering companies in the north-east depend upon the mines, so if the pits in the north-east have to close, unemployment will double.

We have heard about privatisation in the debate, but I remember what happened under nationalisation before privatisation. I remember that when, under nationalisation, the boards wanted to raise the price of electricity and coal, Governments, including Tory Governments, did not allow them to raise their prices. The Government laid a dead hand on nationalised industries, but as soon as these industries were privatised, the bills doubled, then trebled and then quadrupled. Before we knew where we were, the bills were enormous. That has been proved; the figures are there for all to see. Privatisation is not efficient. All that has happened is that prices have increased. I ask the Minister to look at the price increases that these so-called wonderful privatised industries have introduced.

Mr. John Marshall: Can the hon. Gentleman confirm that, in industries such as telecommunications, the regulator has imposed a formula that ensures that prices go up by very much less than any increase in the cost of living, and that in 1993 they will go down?

Mr. Campbell: I will give a little bit there because, of all the privatised industries, British Telecom is the best, but that has not happened to electricity and gas prices. There has been an enormous increase in those bills since privatisation. I challenge the Minister to bring those figures to the Dispatch Box.

The former Prime Minister referred to rolling back the carpet of socialism, so I look at what rolling back the carpet of socialism has done to this country. I see that manufacturing is disappearing. I also see unemployed people, particularly unemployed young people. One of my sons is out of work and struggling to find some sort of job somewhere in my constituency.

Last weekend we read in our local Newcastle newspaper, the *Sunday Sun*, that the Department of Social Security in Long Benton, which deals with unemployment claims, is to have its work put out to contract. An American company that uses child labour in the Philippines, at 38p an hour, is to be asked to do the work. Over 1,000 jobs in the Long Benton DSS office will disappear. They will be done by deaf mutes in the Philippines. Those are the sort of people who are used by American companies to do computer work. It is a disgrace that the Government are allowing that contract to go ahead, with the loss of over 1,000 jobs.

Unemployment is the greatest evil of our time. It was an evil in the 1930s and it is an evil now. I never like trying to connect unemployment with crime, but when young people have idle hands and nothing to do they create trouble. When we see kids on the street stealing cars and doing all these other things, we have to ask ourselves why they are not working. When I left school—25 of us left school at the same time—half of us went to work at the local colliery, while the other half went to build ships. Now they are going to close the collieries. The Swan Hunter shipyard might also close. Where will these kids find jobs? Of course they are on the streets. Of course they are causing trouble. They have no hope. They have no vision. They have nothing, because the Government have given them nothing. YTS is not the answer for these young kids.

I ask the Minister to look at providing decent apprenticeship schemes. Nowadays, I never hear of kids who are apprentices. My local authority has had to cut out apprenticeships because it does not have the money for them. Like most other authorities, it has been capped.

The young are the most important people in this country. Crime is increasing because unemployment is increasing. I believe that the two go together and that they should be dealt with very quickly.

8.5 pm

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): One of the constant threads through the debate has been the so-called long-term decline of British manufacturing. That ought to worry any hon. Member. It was a worry at one time. Throughout the 20 years until 1982, the United Kingdom's share of world manufacturing exports fell from 15 to 8 per cent., almost halving our share of manufacturing exports. That was a worry for the Conservative Government who were in power for part of that time. It does not come well from the Opposition to lecture us about manufacturing decline when the greatest part of our decline in manufacturing exports since the second world war came during the period when they were in power for the longest period.

When we came to power in 1979, we were faced with many problems in the British economy that had become almost intractable, not the least of which was nationalisation. Under nationalisation, our economy was never given a chance to work. The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) put his finger on the point when he said that it was a dead hand. That is exactly what nationalisation was. No economic decisions were made under nationalisation. Only political decisions were made. They plagued the economy. It was never allowed to function in the market-oriented way that business needs if it is to survive. There was no market discipline whatsoever under nationalisation. Politicians made decisions that suited their constituencies, not the country's economy.

When we came to power, we inherited subsidy, protection, import restriction, inefficiency, overmanning, restrictive practices, frequent strikes and, as a legacy of the last Labour Government because of their Industrial Relations Act 1976, the strikers' charter. We had to deal with those problems through our supply-side reforms. We introduced five employment Acts, all of which were opposed by the Labour party and by the trade union movement, whose greatest wish, from 1979 onwards, seemed to be to see Britain's vitals displayed on a bed of lettuce internationally. We decided that the problem had to be tackled head on.

Last year, 500,000 working days were lost due to industrial disputes. In 1979, when we came to power, 29 million working days were lsot due to industrial disputes. It has fallen to the lot of the Conservative Government to come to the rescue of the British work force against the trade union barons and the wishes of the Labour party.

There has been another spin-off. There are now better management practices. We have removed the dead hand of Government interference at every level of management practice. Therefore, better management has developed. I believe that we shall see the development of even better management. Further supply-side reform is still required. There needs to be further deregulation. Under the previous Labour Government, there were 27,000 different kinds of regulation, all of which have been abolished.

The most important factor has been privatisation. Forty-six major businesses have been privatised; two thirds of the state sector has returned to where it belongs, in the private sector. Since then we have seen massive increases in productivity. Someone mentioned British Steel earlier—in 1979, because of the ridiculous overmanning that existed in the industry, it took 13·2 man hours to produce a tonne of steel; now it takes 4·8 man hours. Under nationalised British Leyland, we produced six cars per employee in 1979; under privatised Rover, we produce 25 cars per employee.

There was more. We decided that we needed a low-tax, low-inflation regime if business was to thrive. Our corporation tax is now lower than that in any other European Community or G7 country. Our small company rate has come down from 42 to 25 per cent., and our inflation, which averaged 15·5 per cent. between 1974 and 1979, peaking at 26·9 per cent.—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) may laugh at that, but it is nothing to laugh at; it is rather a matter for shame.

Mr. Enright: Will the hon. Gentleman care to explain the part that the Barber boom Budget played in inflation before we started to get it under control?

Dr. Fox: Yes, indeed. Any Government who fail to control monetary policy will certainly get a bout of inflation. We are perfectly willing to accept that mistakes were made in 1987-88—but for the Labour party to pretend that for its entire period of office it was stuck with the legacies of a Conservative Government is nonsense, considering that the Labour Government refused to impose any discipline whatever except that imposed by the International Monetary Fund—when they absolutely had to accept it, because the country was broke.

Between 1982 and 1989 manufacturing output grew by an average of 3·7 per cent. a year, and manufacturing exports by an average of 6 per cent. per year. Manufacturing investment—which the Labour party claims does not exist—grew by 7·5 per cent. per year. All three reached all-time records.

I do not expect the Labour party to understand that. Labour Members do not understand market economics, and believe that everything is measured by the number of people employed in an industry. They do not believe that health is measured by the number of patients treated; they believe that it is measured by the amount of money spent and the number of people employed. We have given up trying to educate Labour Members. Perhaps we should simply stick to the facts. We do not expect them to understand that, in 1990, profitability was 50 per cent. higher than its previous peak in 1979. They do not understand profits or dividends.

Since 1981, United Kingdom manufacturing exports have grown by 66 per cent. more than those of any other G7 country. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said, we are now a net exporter of television sets, with a trade surplus of £440 million last year. Scotland supplies 40 per cent. of the desktop computers used in Europe—and those exports now earn twice as much as whisky exports. Those are all great achievements. It is beyond me why the Labour party always refuses to accept anything good that happens in this country.

We have hit specific problems with the recession, but the 7·5 per cent. fall in output that has taken place during the recession is only half the fall that occurred during the 1981 recession—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras laughs while I am making this

[Dr. Fox]

important point. He probably fails to understand that the current recession is caused by a lack of demand, and not by a structural incapacity to supply. The Opposition's great weakness—if the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I shall be happy to listen to him—is that, according to their logic, we cannot recover from a 7·5 per cent. fall in output. Yet from a fall in output twice as big in 1981, we recovered to reach record levels of output, exports and investment, as I have already said. I do not see the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras jumping up now to defend the logic of this case.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Can the hon. Gentleman tell us why demand has fallen?

Dr. Fox: Demand has fallen because there is a fall in consumer confidence, because the money supply in this country was out of kilter, and because there is an international recession. I should have thought that even the economic simpletons on the Opposition Front Bench might have managed to understand that.

I want to say one or two things about our manufacturing companies. Despite Labour attempts to rewrite history, our success in the 1980s did not extend only to the service sector. Between 1979 and 1990 about 4,300 manufacturing companies were created per year, compared with 1,200 per year between 1963 and 1979, when we came to office. That is a proud record. The number of VAT-registered businesses in manufacturing has increased from 144,000 in 1980 to 171,000 now. That is another record of which I am proud.

There are problems with our manufacturing base in that it forms a smaller proportion of our GDP than it once did, but the fastest fall took place between 1960 and 1983. If we measure GDP at constant 1985 prices, our proportion of GDP from manufacturing industry has risen from 20·4 to 20·9 per cent.—*[Interruption.]* Labour Members are jeering, because that is the only intellectual level that they can achieve. They cannot understand that the United Kingdom now has specific advantages.

We have a stable democracy with a stable Government who have already been in office for a long time—although nothing like as long as they will be in office. We have a free-market Government admired by our competitors, we have English as the natural trading language, we have a competitive tax regime, low interest rates, good industrial relations—the Labour party never managed to give us those—and now we have a competitive exchange rate free from the strictures of the exchange rate mechanism, good international transport links——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Time is up.

8.15 pm

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): I was disappointed by the opening speech of the President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. The right hon. Gentleman must realise that industry is now looking for a new approach and wants him to signal that he is prepared to listen and to work with it. The fact that he did not do so will be regretted by the people who are in industry trying to make it work.

I represent an area whose history reads like a history of manufacturing industry in this country. Birmingham and the west midlands have been central to our country's development. Our region has been the home for steel and iron, coal and cloth, cars and aeroplanes. It has helped to create the wealth of this nation. Its people have been inventors, designers, entrepreneurs and engineers. But because our prosperity depends on the manufacturing industry, under the Conservative Government it, and our future, are in jeopardy.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Morris: No, I am sorry—because of the time limit I shall not give way.

The west midlands now has the third worst unemployment record in Britain. It has the largest number of long-term unemployed people. Unemployment among the under-25s has almost doubled over the past three years alone. The west midlands has seen the largest reduction in the number of people in work anywhere in the country.

When we consider the statistics surrounding manufacturing industry, it is not hard to see why that is. We have experienced the biggest loss of manufacturing jobs anywhere in the country. One fifth of all jobs lost in the nation's manufacturing sector have been lost in the west midlands. The effect on Birmingham and the other cities in the region has been devastating. Fifty people are chasing every job vacancy; £2·6 billion is being spent every year on keeping people out of work. Month after month, the list of household name companies that are making workers redundant grows—Alvis and Tarmac, Lucas and GKN, Cadbury and Rover.

Which constituency in Birmingham has had the highest increase in unemployment over the past three years? It is not Sparkbrook, Small Heath or Yardley—my constituency—but the leafy, affluent suburb represented by the chairman of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler). The right hon. Gentleman has seen unemployment in his constituency increase by 127 per cent. over the past three years. That is how widespread unemployment is in the city of Birmingham. That is the depth of the recession in the west midlands.

The Government cannot escape their share of responsibility, as they seek to do time and time again. Opposition Members and some people outside the House are saying that we have a do-nothing Government—a Government with a hands-off approach, who do not intervene—and I share that view. Although that may be true, what is more worrying is that, when they do intervene, they get it wrong. They intervened to raise interest rates and factories closed; they intervened to reduce local council spending and redundancies increased; and they intervened to increase VAT and consumer demand dropped. I am not sure whether we are better off when the Government intervene or when they do not. Whichever approach they take, they get the formula wrong again and again.

The most common message that I get from industrialists and workers in my constituency, in Birmingham and in the west midlands is that, because the Government do not understand them, they cannot help them. They say so because they have looked at the evidence. They tell me that a Government who understood industry would not have had a tax regime which deterred

investment, and that a Government who understood industry would not cut money for training and would regulate bank lending policy.

What the Government do not realise—and why industrialists feel that they do not understand them—is that if they are going to support manufacturing industry, they must take into account the consequences upon it of their actions. If one cuts spending on education, has no energy policy, and has no programme for re-skilling people, one damages industry.

As the Engineering Employers Federation said, when launching its "Manifesto for Jobs and Growth" last year:

"The United Kingdom is an industrial nation with an anti-industrial culture."

Nowhere can that be seen better than in Birmingham during the past six months.

When the President of the Board of Trade announced his pit closure programme last September, he seemed not to have given any thought to its effect on the rest of manufacturing industry. When he gave his reasons for the decision, I never heard him say how much he had taken that into account, but £100 million of British manufacturing money is tied up in the mining industry, and half as much again in exports. If, because of pit closures, the home market for that sector of manufacturing industry falls, their export market could go as well.

Latch and Bachelor, in my constituency, is not a mining firm and does not dig coal but manufactures the finest winding gear in the world. It is a small family firm, with a history going back 270 years in Birmingham, and it has orders for 30 of our mines and an export order book worth £1 million. Last September, that firm's survival was put at risk because the President of the Board of Trade did not appear to have considered the effects of his coal plan on the rest of manufacturing industry.

The plan affects not only Latch and Bachelor but firms throughout the west midlands, such as John Butlin, which provides transport, J. J. Gallagher, which does construction work, and Lyndhurst engineering, the millwrights. The future of all those manufacturing companies is tied up with that of British Coal.

Last September, the President of the Board of Trade turned his back not only on the mining industry and mining communities but on manufacturing industries and their communities. Within six months, having not learned his lesson, he did exactly the same again. He failed to deliver when Leyland DAF needed short-term help to ensure a secure and profitable long-term future. Again, it was as though he was blinkered to the effects of any decline or closure of Leyland DAF on the whole manufacturing sector.

Leyland DAF is not all that is at risk. There are also the firms that tool their equipment, those that sell them parts and those that manufacture materials. They are all victims of a Government who will not put manufacturing industry at the heart of their industrial policy, and that is what the EEF meant when it talked about an industrial nation that is trying to operate in "an anti-industrial culture".

Government manufacturing policy lacks a strategy, vision and cohesion. Unless someone in the Government begins to draw the threads together and to put manufacturing industry at the centre of Government considerations, we shall not climb out of the recession and we shall not bring jobs back.

Yet, even in these difficult times, there is great optimism in the west midlands and in Birmingham, where we have great reason for feeling that we can succeed. We have a highly skilled work force and people who are willing to learn skills and new skills. We have women and men with ideas, inventions and initiative, industrialists with ambition and local authorities that wish to support them. That is what the west midlands manufacturing sector has to offer this nation. Quite honestly, it is an offer that the Government cannot afford to turn down.

However, in accepting what the west midlands has to offer to the regeneration of the economy and industry, the Government have to make a commitment to a partnership. Their role is to end short-termism, to invest in training, to spread knowledge about new technology, to support research, to adopt a tax structure to help investment and —most of all—to give a commitment to listen and to take their share of responsibility.

8.25 pm

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I listened with interest to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris). She referred to this country's cultural problems over manufacturing industry, but I suspect that she and other Opposition Members would concede that the origins of those problems go far deeper into our history than recent events or Governments.

The hon. Member for Yardley also spoke of her constituency. It is common ground in the House this evening that jobs in our constituencies, including mine, depend on the success of manufacturing industry.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak briefly, because of my link with the parliamentary all-party group for engineering development, and my attempt, so far as one can specialise in this House, to maintain my interest in it in recent years.

I hope that two basic themes will emerge from my remarks. First, hon. Members and people outside should not talk down the achievements of our manufacturing industry, which are very great. I was able to discuss that at greater length during a Christmas Adjournment debate on engineering on Monday 14 December, which lasted one and a half hours.

The second theme is that it is important that we remain ahead of our competitors in technical developments and innovation. If we do not remain ahead if them in research, development and innovation, there will be no future for our manufacturing industry, no matter what other policies the Government put in place. Those remarks have implications for education, training and skills. I think that the Secretary of State for Employment is going to reply to the debate, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend will pass on the message to the Department that it is good to pay tribute to the efforts that my hon. Friends are making to improve our skills training, to the good of manufacturing industry.

The Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), was reticent on the question of productivity, which is crucial to the success of our manufacturing industry. That was not surprising, because, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the United Kingdom was at the bottom of the league table for productivity growth among major industrial nations—a very poor record.

Bearing in mind the remarks made by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman at the start of the debate, it is important to remind the House of the appalling record of

[Mr. Patrick Thompson]

Labour Governments in the 1960s and 1970s. It reduced our ability to compete in world markets. My hon. Friends the Members for Woodspring (Dr. Fox) and for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) made very clearly indeed—much more effectively than I have time to do—the point that those were the years of overmanning, of ineffective management, of industrial chaos. But under the present Government, we are making productivity gains that are crucial to the success of our manufacturing industry. Technical innovation and improved productivity must be the right way forward.

A recent CBI report said that the achievements of our manufacturing industry tend to be played down or ignored. It referred to the attitude of the media. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) talked about the popularity of the media as a career for young people. I was as horrified as my hon. Friends, and, indeed, Opposition Members, at my hon. Friend's revelation. Ultimately, the media have a responsibility—a responsibility that they are not facing up to—to emphasise the positive with regard to our achievements in engineering and manufacturing and our concern in general. Undoubtedly they have a right to criticise and to probe. They have a right to uncover things that are going wrong, but they also have a responsibility to emphasise our achievements and successes. The CBI was right to draw attention to this matter.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Trade has drawn attention in recent speeches to the current deficit in manufactured goods and to the need to increase our share of trade in capital goods. My right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench are right to continue to emphasise the importance of manufacturing industry, which has been a common theme in this debate. Hardly a day passes without a leading industrialist arguing against any half-hearted commitment to Europe and the single market. Progress with the single market and with the Maastricht treaty is vital to the future of trade and of manufacturing industry.

I should like to place on record my hope that, under the leadership of the present Government, we can get through the process of ratifying the Maastricht treaty as soon as possible—hopefully, with more assistance from Opposition Members than we have had in recent debates. That is where the responsibility for the current delay lies. Opposition Members who, like me, support the early ratification of the Maastricht treaty ought to adopt a more responsible attitude. But this is not a debate on the Maastricht treaty. We have had enough of those for the time being.

It is high-tech companies that will lead the way. The link between technical progress and industrial progress has been well supported by all the academic research and literature that has been studied by those of us who have the time to do so. Success in high-level technology comes from the correct deployment of engineering and manufacturing skills.

I should like to put on record a number of things that I hope my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will do their best to encourage. I hope that they will do all they can to encourage an increase in the amount of research and development going on in our companies. I hope that, in collaboration with their colleagues in the Department of Education, they will do all they can to increase the number of support personnel trained at NVQ levels 3 and 4. After all, we have a good record in the production of skilled engineers at the very top level. We do not have such a good record in the production of the technician support that is needed in industry. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will take that point on board. I have made it before, and I shall no doubt return to it.

I hope that Ministers will do all they can to move away from short-termism, which has been referred to by hon. Members on both sides of the House. This is indeed a problem. Those responsible for investing in industry need to look more to the long term.

Finally, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will look at the current structure of engineering in this country and do what they can to support those in the profession who are trying to end its rather hierarchical and Victorian organisation. I realise that this is something the profession has to do itself, but if we can encourage the process, that will be to the benefit of manufacturing industry.

The question of attitude and culture has been referred to. As a nation, we need to accept that our future prosperity and self-respect depend on our attitude to creative and innovative work in industry. Conservative Governments since 1979 have helped industry by sharpening incentives, curbing excessive union power, curbing inflation, which is now down to 1·7 per cent.—the lowest level for 25 years—and facilitating the continuous process of deregulation and the removal of red tape. Of course, all of this is diametrically opposite to the job-destroying panaceas that have been deployed by Opposition Members, not only today but in earlier policy pronouncements.

Our aim must be to make sure that British industry is at the forefront of technical advance. I, with my right hon. and hon. Friends, shall do all I can to support Ministers in their endeavours to encourage this. We must take every opportunity to make our manufacturing industry a success.

8.35 pm

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): In a debate on manufacturing, it is important that someone from Coventry should make a contribution. I am aware of the fact that many hon. Members want to take part, and, in effect, I am speaking also for my hon. Friends the Members for Coventry, South-East (Mr. Cunningham) and for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson).

Having heard other hon. Members refer to manufacturing interests in their constituencies, I must say that Coventry had the lot. Coventry was at the heart of the manufacturing industry of this country. It is known for cars, but we had machine tools, defence, the aircraft industry. A roll call of the names of the companies that existed in Coventry is an indication of the very basis of British industry as it was—Jaguar, Peugeot, Talbot, Standard-Triumph, Alfred Herbert, Wickman, Webster and Bennett, Rolls Royce, GEC. We had them all.

I suppose that, with the restructuring that took place, it was inevitable that some of those names would disappear. But some of them disappeared unnecessarily because of the policies that the Conservatives have pursued since they came to power. We have had roller-coaster policies, with no stability, no strategy and no thought for the basic wealth creation of the country.

The first part of the roller-coaster was the deepest and worst recession that we have seen since the 1930s. In the first couple of years of the Conservative Administration, we lost 20 per cent. of our manufacturing base—20 per cent. that disappeared, never to reappear. That was a hammer blow to places like Coventry, where the 20 per cent. was absolutely disproportionate. The economy and communities were decimated.

The second part of the roller-coaster was the crazy, unplanned, unthought-out consumer boom of the 1980s, when we were told by the then Chancellor of the Exchequer—what a wonderful Chancellor he was: unassailable and with all the other qualities that were attributed to him—that we had achieved an economic miracle and made the breakthrough. We had a consumer boom based almost entirely on an appalling level of personal debt, which was deliberately encouraged to reach such heights that the second recession was inevitable. What we are experiencing now is the longest, if not the deepest, recession since the war.

Mr. Jim Cunningham (Coventry, South-East): I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that Conservative Members have made much of the interventionist policies of previous Labour Governments and certain Conservative ones. Is it not ironic that the President of the Board of Trade offered nothing to assist industries, especially those in the west midlands and in Coventry in particular? After all, in the early 1970s, it was a Conservative Government who had to intervene on behalf of the aircraft industry in Coventry. Had they not done so, we would have no aircraft industry today.

Does my hon. Friend also agree that it is ironic that, within the next few days, Rolls-Royce is due to announce a number of redundancies, as yet unquantified, which will have a serious effect not only on that company but on its subcontractors and general employment opportunities in the city?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That was a long intervention.

Mr. Ainsworth: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the fact that the continuing recession will add to the unemployment problem in Coventry.

In this second recession, some 7,200 of my constituents are now unemployed. In the past two years, the number of people who have been thrown out of work has gone up by 57 per cent. I accept that that increase might be lower than that suffered in other areas, but that is simply because we started from such an appallingly high level of unemployment. Parts of my constituency and other parts of Coventry have been in recession for as long as the Government have been in power. We have had not two and a half years of recession, but 14 years of it, because Coventry is a manufacturing city and it is at the heart of our manufacturing base. For 14 years, however, the Government have not given a damn about manufacturing.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ainsworth: No, I will not, because of the time limit on speeches.

In many parts of Coventry, the recession has lasted for a full 14 years, and the city has suffered from all the social problems that arise from that and which cost the rest of us dear. People tend to ignore the cost of unemployment and see it as a personal tragedy for those who have lost their jobs, but it costs the rest of us a great deal.

We were recently told that the Prime Minister had undergone a transformation; that he had come to the conclusion that, after all, the manufacturing base was important. He said that he had always held that view—unlike his right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, who was extremely vocal in his support of manufacturing when he was out of power but who changed his tune when he got back into it.

The only puzzle is why on earth the Prime Minister never said anything in support of manufacturing while he sat in Cabinet meetings with his predecessor. We know that she was a formidable lady, but it seems that the Prime Minister kept absolutely quiet and said absolutely nothing about his heartfelt views on the importance of the manufacturing industry. Despite its alleged importance, nothing was done until now, when, all of a sudden, the Prime Minister recognised that his views, which were once held by the minority, are now held by the majority. Where on earth was he when all the lasting damage was done to our basic national interest?

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Is it not true that, if this Pauline, Damascene conversion of the Prime Minister to the cause of manufacturing is sincere, the Budget could be used to restore capital allowances? That would give impetus to the investment that is needed in the west midlands, in my hon. Friend's constituency and in the city of Coventry.

Mr. Ainsworth: I agree. That is not the only thing that could be done, but it could offer constructive help to support the manufacturing base.

Mr. Hawkins: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Ainsworth: No, I am sorry. The hon. Gentleman should get one of his hon. Friends to give him some time.

I remember the "Labour isn't Working" campaign that the Conservative party waged during its 1979 election campaign. How hollow those words now seem. In 14 years, the manufacturing base of this country has shrunk from providing 32 per cent. of our output to providing just 20 per cent. It is widely recognised that our manufacturing base is no longer of a size to support the living standards that we all wish to enjoy. We have become an economic pigmy and a second-world nation.

The CBI has been quoted in support of the Government, but it has recently stated that our manufacturing base is

"as yet insufficient to provide the critical mass necessary for a successful manufacturing economy."

That is what 14 years of Tory rule has brought us. I attended a recent meeting with Mr. Howard Davies of the CBI. Conservative Members may tell us that there are signs of a recovery, but he said that those signs are no stronger than they were last May. He said that any recovery was simply discount-led.

I believe that we are being told about signs of a recovery deliberately to avoid any effective action being taken in the Budget next week. As my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, North-West (Mr. Robinson), has suggested, the Budget could be one for jobs, recovery and investment. If that does not happen, it will be an absolute tragedy. That is what has been promised, and that is what we should be able to expect.

[Mr. Ainsworth]

We should invest in our people. Let us see some sign of such investment from the Government in the Budget next week. Let us judge them on what they do, not on what they say.

8.45 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I believe that it was the 16th century Englishman, John Heywood, who said:

"Who is so deaf or blind as is he
That wilfully will neither hear nor see?"

He could so easily have been writing about today's Labour party. His words would be a fitting epigram for a party that came in with the 20th century and will go out with it. It has been in opposition for such a long time that it can no longer distinguish between opposing the Government and opposing the country. That is why the Labour party takes every possible opportunity to spread doom and gloom whenever there is good news about the economy. As the Prime Minister said this afternoon, whatever is good news for the country is bad news for the Labour party. The disgraceful vote by the Labour party last night against the Maastricht treaty is the latest addition to a long chapter of treachery against our economy.

I propose to use the parameters laid down by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) as a measure of the manufacturing sector, but I shall refer particularly to the manufacturing industry of Wales. Since 1983, the number of people employed in manufacturing in Wales has increased by some 3·3 per cent., and among ladies employment has increased by 12 per cent. Even if one uses the unfavourable year of 1986 as the base for such a comparison, the total number of people working in the manufacturing sector in Wales has gone up by 5 per cent. Since 1983, output in Wales has gone up by almost 32 per cent., and manufacturing investment has gone up by almost 150 per cent.

It is interesting to consider the contribution that the Welsh manufacturing sector has made to the gross domestic product. In 1983, that contribution stood at 22·2 per cent., but by 1991 it had risen to 25·5 per cent. —an increase of 14·5 per cent. Since 1980, more than 800 manufacturing plants have opened in Wales, with the creation of 50,000 jobs.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): How many have closed?

Mr. Richards: That is exactly what I mean—the Labour party always looks at the negative side, never the positive.

Recent evidence of growth in Wales is provided by the third-quarter index of production and construction for 1992, which showed that output had gone up by 1·4 per cent. on the previous quarter. A CBI survey on January 26 this year showed that business optimism had increased significantly. The chairman of the Welsh CBI, Sir Peter Phillips, said:

"These results are encouraging and indicate that Welsh manufacturing firms began 1993 with improved expectations and greater optimism."

Many countries abroad invest in Wales, Japan in particular. The Japanese say that Wales is the most popular location in the United Kingdom for their consumer electronics manufacturers. That is no small wonder when one considers that companies such as Hitachi, Kyushu, Matsushita, Orion, Sharp and Sony and many others are among them. In a survey of Japanese companies that invest in Wales, one explanation given by all of them for investing in Wales is "the co-operative attitude of Government", to quote them.

Economic commentators also agree about the optimistic state of manufacturing in Wales. The chief economist of the National Westminster Bank said recently of the Welsh economy:

"The economy has become much more diversified than it was 10 years ago. An increasingly competitive and enterprising manufacturing sector is replacing more traditional industries, while the prominent financial and business services sector has become a major source of employment".

The Labour party frequently attempts to cast a slur on the jobs that come to Wales. I draw their attention to a study conducted by the Cardiff business school, called "Japanese Investment in Wales: Economic and Social Consequences", which highlighted the research and development work being undertaken. Researchers found that, of the 23 manufacturing companies surveyed, nine had undertaken design work with one consumer electronics manufacturer intending to transfer major development work from Japan within the next couple of years.

When the Labour party talks about Wales, it is talking about south Wales. I was fascinated the other day to learn that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies), in announcing an economic strategy for the whole of Wales, announced what amounted to no more than an itinerary for his hon. Friend to tour the Valleys. There was no mention of the manufacturing area in north Wales which I represent. I point out to the Labour party that, in the county of Clwyd, where my constituency is, since 1983 there have been 2,500 projects, amounting to an investment of £1 billion, creating 13,500 new jobs and protecting 2,700 other jobs.

I say to the President of the Board of Trade that it is crucial for the future economy of Clwyd, notwithstanding all the good news and good investment that has taken place in the past 14 years, that the Hamilton gas development in Liverpool bay takes place. It is important, not only to north Wales, but also to Merseyside. Some £1·5 billion of investment and several thousand jobs are at stake.

I urge my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to give the go-ahead to the Connah's Quay power station, notwithstanding that he has the difficult choice to make between gas and coal. For my part of north Wales, it is vital that the Connah's Quay power station gets the go-ahead, and that the Hamilton gas project is also allowed to proceed.

8.54 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I have to confess that after a decade spent working in television and a lifetime spent working in the Labour party, I am a great lover of melodrama, bad theatre and genuine ham acting. That was why I loved the speech given by the President of the Board of Trade today. It was a wonderful rant. He is becoming the Government's all-purpose rant boy. There is no problem so bad that it cannot be concealed by trundling out the President to give us a rant here in the Chamber.

As for the other piece of bad theatre, I am really enthusiastic about watching the deathbed repentance scene that is being enacted by the entire Government after

14 years of clobbering, weakening, undermining and destroying manufacturing industry in this country. They now discover in extremis and in Downing street—they are probably the same place these days—that manufacturing is vital to the economy and that we need policies to rebuild the manufacturing heart of this economy.

I am delighted that the repentance has come, but my worry is that it has probably come to late. Does the Prime Minister really mean it? He is moving from policy to policy like a drunk from lamp post to lamp post and one does not know whether he is just attaching himself to this lamp post and hiccupping slowly for a short while before moving off to another lamp post in that haphazard process that constitutes Government policy these days. Does he really mean it?

It seems to me that the hope is that a kind of devaluation à la 1972 and 1973—a half ton of Ted, a little dollop of Bexley Sidcup devaluation—will alleviate the pain. Coming out of the exchange rate mechanism and letting the pound go down and getting the benefits of the growth as he did is the hope, but I am afraid that it will not work, because the problems of manufacturing are too deep-seated and the damage inflicted on manufacturing is too great for a little respray job, and the alleviation of the pain that has come with the pound going down, to work this time.

We have a very deep-seated problem. The essence of it is that in this country, manufacturing output at the end of last year compared to 1970 is up by only 14 per cent. That is a record that has been equalled by no other country. Most manufacturing nations have increased their output by more than half and some have doubled in that period. Ours is up by 14 per cent., demand is up and that demand has been filled by imports. This is the key weakness of manufacturing and because output in this country has hardly gone up, demand is met by imports. Imports of finished manufactures are up by 754 per cent. in value since 1970 whereas exports of finished manufactures by value are up by 153 per cent.

Therein lies the disaster, and the process of imports getting a deeper hold on our market than in any other competing economy. Manufacturing imports filled 37 per cent. of demand, on the last figures published by this Government. That was in 1989. They have stopped publishing the figures, so far as I can see, but it must now be about 42 per cent., double the proportion taken by manufactured imports in Germany, Italy and France. Therein lies the weakness of our manufacturing, which is losing its place. Therein lies the gaping balance of payments deficit that now obsesses the House. The value of imports of manufactures in 1992 exceeded exports by 12 per cent. We are just not paying our way in the world.

Unless we produce, we cannot consume—and we cannot produce enough. That is the problem. Therein lies the loss of 3·5 million jobs in manufacturing. Usually, Conservative Members just attack Labour, but their only intelligent argument today has been that all manufacturing countries' manufacturing work forces are shrinking. That is certainly true, but nowhere has the shrinkage been as great as in this country. Those countries are producing much more with fewer workers. We are producing slightly more with a lot fewer workers—3·5 million fewer.

The difficulty that the Government face is that they have stumbled into devaluation—they were forced into a competitive devaluation without understanding it. It is certainly true that an overvalued exchange rate has constituted most of the cause of the problem. The fight against inflation led to higher exhange rates to keep imports cheap. Then there was the impact of North sea oil and the influence of finance, which wants a high and stable exchange rate, unlike the manufacturing sector. Then there was the fact of our deflated economy for much of the period. All these factors have meant high exchange rates.

The costs of production as opposed to the costs of imported manufactured goods have, because of the exchange rate, risen by 39 per cent. since 1970. No supermarket that increased its prices by 39 per cent. compared with those of the competition would survive. How can a manufacturing nation that has done exactly that survive?

The only way to get out of this is to reverse what has been happening. If overvaluation has caused the contraction of industry, it will be restored only by a competitive currency, and that will revive industry. Unfortunately, the devaluation to achieve this has to be bigger than the loss of competitiveness caused by overvaluation. Once we have lost markets it is much more difficult to win them back. We need a large devaluation to get a competitive exchange rate and the only definition of a competitive exchange rate is one with which a nation can balance its trade in conditions of full employment and high and sustainable growth. All other definitions are fallacious and a burden on industry.

We have gone only part of the way to that necessary devaluation: 16 per cent. as opposed to the 39 per cent. increase in prices. We must go further, because the only way to restore the damage is to replace imports in the British market. It is difficult to increase exports because it is difficult to set up the distribution networks, the more so in the depressed conditions of the export markets, but if we can replace imports—roll back the tide of imports—by a deliberate policy of import substitution, using the price mechanism to make imports dearer and domestic production more competitive, we can then reverse the disaster.

I offer the Prime Minister a slogan: if it is not hurting the importers, it is not working. That is the keynote of the strategy of regeneration. The problem is far greater than the Government have conceded it to be. The easy, quick devaluation that we have had hitherto goes only part of the way to solving it. There is a great deal more to do. I could give a long prescription—training, investment, industrial strategy and working with manufacturing industry to expand and widen the industrial base. I hope that that is what the Government will begin to do, after all these years of doing the opposite. I hope that this is not just another lamp post.

9.2 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): I am pleased to be able to contribute, albeit briefly, to the debate, because manufacturing industry is extremely important in my constituency. Blackpool tends to be thought of only as a centre of the tourist industry. Those who know it only from occasional visits to party conferences may not realise how significant its manufacturing industry is. It is a large employer in the area, and we have a number of extremely successful companies, not only in local terms but in world terms. For instance, we have one of the leading British manufacturers of toys, having to compete with low wage

[Mr. Nick Hawkins]

costs elsewhere in the world—especially in China—which is continuing to expand its product range and enjoying a great deal of success.

We also have one of the most successful manufacturing companies in the production of street furniture, which it sells to municipal authorities throughout the United Kingdom and the world. Just outside my constituency, where it employs a large number of my constituents, we have part of ICI and, significantly, part of British Aerospace which, in recent months, has successfully attracted orders for the Tornado from Saudi Arabia and for the European fighter aircraft, now known as EFA 2000. The thousands of my constituents who work in manufacturing industry, especially those who work for British Aerospace, know that they have the Government and the Prime Minister to thank for securing their jobs.

I spent six years working in business, commerce and industry before coming to the House, and others with similar experience find it unacceptable that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) should laugh himself silly whenever my hon. Friends praise the strength of British manufacturing industry. People working at the sharp end of manufacturing do not take kindly to the hon. Gentleman's jibes.

It is a tough manufacturing world out there, and one reason why the unreconstructed clause 4 socialists whom the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras epitomises are badly derided by those who lead manufacturing industry is that they know that few Opposition Members have ever spent a day doing anything productive in British industry. The vast majority of them have no experience of manufacturing of any sort, which is why they still regard profit as a dirty word.

Opposition Members still talk about imposing windfall taxes and establishing more bureaucracy. Indeed, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) gave as his recipe for manufacturing industry the establishment of more bureaucracy, more bodies, more quangos and more levies. Such a regime would not be appreciated by those who run manufacturing industry or those who work in it on the shop floor, whom Labour Members claim to represent. They do not represent the interests of British manufacturing industry in any form, and that is becoming increasingly clear from Opposition speeches on the subject.

I could hardly believe my ears when the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) said that he believed in the dead hand of nationalised industry. Nor could I believe it when I heard the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) talk about what had gone wrong with manufacturing industry in his area. I lived and worked in Coventry in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The cause of the decline and collapse of manufacturing there, and throughout the west midlands, was the appalling union militancy.

Anyone representing a west midlands constituency who glosses over the history of Red Robbo and all the militant unionism that caused the downfall of manufacturing is trying to rewrite history, as Labour Members often try to do. My hon. Friends and I will not let them get away with that. We have no intention of allowing them to hoodwink the British people.

Those who have worked in manufacturing industry in the last 15 to 20 years remember only too well the days of what became known as the British disease, when Britain was the sick man of Europe. They were the days of the last Labour Government, in which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras served—*[Interruption.]*—rather, I should have said that he was a prospective candidate at that time. I remember it because I campaigned against him in the 1979 general election with my hon. Friend who now represents Salisbury.

I recall vividly the ways in which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras tried to defend the appalling record of trade union militancy. He now seeks to rewrite history, but I assure him that those who run manufacturing industry will not take kindly to his lighthearted approach to the whole issue. I am concerned to ensure that, when we discuss manufacturing, we take the advice of those at the sharp end and, for example, listen to the CBI, which said in October 1991:

> "Recent years have seen a transformation in Britain's manufacturing base. The recent strength of exports confirms the widespread anecdotal evidence that companies based in Britain are able to compete successfully in some of the toughest technology-intensive markets in the world."

That is the view of those running manufacturing industry. Opposition Members would do well to take their advice rather than continue to posture and try to rewrite history.

There is hardly a Member on the Opposition Benches with business management experience. I remind them, when they talk about the loss of apprenticeships, that the Labour party wrecked Britain's apprenticeship system when they were in power in the 1960s and 1970s. They and their trade union paymasters disapproved strongly of apprenticeships. They still do not appreciate that it is essential in business to make profits and to reinvest them.

Manufacturing investment has increased in each of the last three quarters in this country, and it is vital that that record continue. It will continue, because the Conservative party believes in investment, it believes in profit to ensure that that reinvestment comes about, and it believes, and will continue to believe, in supporting manufacturing industry and companies such as the successful manufacturing companies in the constituency which I am proud to represent.

9.9 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): In view of the speech by the President of the Board of Trade, the first thing that I must do is get some facts on the record.

The first fact is that, for almost 14 years, Britain has had a Tory Government. For 14 years, the Tories have been putting their economic theories into practice. It is they who are responsible for the state of British industry and it is they who have inflicted mass unemployment on the people of Britain. After 14 years in power, there is no one left to blame but themselves. After nearly 14 years of uninterrupted rule, those self-same Tories have clocked up a deplorable economic record.

Despite the benefits of North sea oil and gas, for the last 10 years of Tory rule Britain has had a trade deficit. For the last seven years the trade deficit has never fallen below £10 billion a year, and it has averaged nearly £16 billion. Fourteen years of Tory free-market economics has devastated some sections of British manufacturing industry. This is shown most clearly in what has happened to Britain's trade.

Under the last Labour Government, Britain had a trade surplus in motor vehicles. Last year, despite all the

preposterous claims by the Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box, Britain had a £3·2 billion deficit in motor vehicles alone. In electrical machinery, the Tories turned an inherited surplus into a deficit of £1·4 billion. In furniture, a surplus has been changed into a deficit of £433 million. In telecommunications and sound equipment, the surplus the Tories inherited has become a deficit of £697 million. Our trade in textiles has moved from break-even to a deficit of £1·5 billion.

When we look at the Tories' unemployment record, their performance is still worse. There are more than 4 million people really out of work in. Britain. Even the Government's figures now show more than 3 million out of work. The Tories fought the general election of 1979 using a poster that purported to show a dole queue and carried the words "Labour isn't Working". That year, unemployment totalled 1,074,000. Since the 1979 general election, unemployment has never fallen back to the level that the Tories inherited—even for a single day. Now, for the fifth out of 14 years of Tory rule, unemployment is again over 3 million. That means that, in one year in every three, the Tories have thrown 3 million of their fellow citizens on the dole.

But this 3 million total is much worse than before, because this time the Tories have pushed unemployment past the 3 million mark despite the effects of more than 30 successive fiddles, all of which have reduced the official unemployment total. If the Department of Employment statisticians were a football team, they would be banned for bringing their profession into disrepute.

Even using these disreputable figures, the situation is grimmer than ever before. More than 1 million people have been out of work for a year or more. More than 1 million young people are out of work. This time, unemployment is not limited mainly to Scotland, Wales and the north of England; it is everywhere and it is hitting everybody.

In London, unemployment is worse than it has ever been in London's history. Half a million Londoners are out of work; 58 Londoners chase every job vacancy. Women's unemployment is far worse in London than in the rest of Britain. Overall, the rate of unemployment in London is now second only to the rate in the northern region. The west midlands is in third place in this league table of misery, waste and disrepair; and even in the previously prosperous south-east, unemployment is now around the national average.

Mr. Mackinlay: One feature of the debate is that, until my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) mentioned the south-east, 10 million who live outside Greater London but within the south-east had not been mentioned. Was not the south-east the cockpit of the last election, as it probably will be of the next? Do not many people in the south-east feel betrayed and deceived by the Conservatives, who said that, if people voted Conservative on Thursday, the recovery would continue on Friday? Does my hon. Friend agree that thousands in the south-east who are unemployed or whose businesses have gone bust want to know which Friday the Prime Minister was referring to?

Mr. Dobson: This is indeed the case. As my hon. Friend knows, I was recently in Basildon, where one in five men are out of work. I think that fewer of them will vote Tory in future.

For years, the Tories and their friends in the City and on the City pages of the newspapers told the people that making things was old hat, and that manufacturing was a job for the third world. The future, they said, was with the service industries. Large manufacturers were seen as creatures of the past; it was said that the self-employed would lead Britain to prosperity.

To be fair, the Tories practised what they preached, and the banks helped them. Manufacturing industry was run down, and it is still being run down. The trouble is that the service industries are going down with it. If we look at who makes up the jobless now, we find that there are more than 900,000 white collar workers, a third higher than last time the official total topped 3 million. Nor have the self-employed been spared the harsh winds of the free market. Last summer, 275,000 people who were formerly self-employed were on the dole, and the Government have yet to publish the most recent figures.

Much of the blame for all that rests with the Tory attitude to manufacturing. In 1979, there were 7,261,000 people employed in manufacturing in Britain, making things for others to buy and use at home and abroad. These were not old smokestack industries such as the Secretary of State referred to in his speech to the Tories at Harrogate, but industries making motor vehicles, electrical plant, furniture, textiles, and telecommunications and sound equipment. But by last December, that total of 7·2 million had plunged to just 4·3 million, and it is still falling fast. By now, manufacturing jobs lost under the Government may exceed 3 million.

Suddenly, the Prime Minsiter has noticed. He said that he did not agree with the neglect of manufacturing industry and that he used to be in a minority, poor lamb, but now he is in a better position to expound his views. As my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) pointed out, there is no evidence that the Prime Minister ever said anything about it before, still less that he did anything. His must have been the industrial strategy that dared not speak its name.

Whatever the Prime Minister may say now, and whatever views he may expound, his record is worse than that of Mrs. Thatcher. While Mrs. Thatcher was Prime Minister, manufacturing jobs were lost at a rate of 186,000 a year. That was not a record to be sneezed at, but it pales beside the record of the present incumbent. The rot seems to have set in when he became Chancellor. In the last quarter under Nigel Lawson, manufacturing jobs went up. During the period that the Prime Minister has lived in Downing Street, first at No. 11 and now at No. 10, manufacturing jobs have fallen every quarter—at a rate of 252,000 a year since he became Chancellor—and at a rate of 312,000 a year since he became Prime Minister.

Never mind what the Government are saying now about manufacturing industry in the 1980s; let us remember what they said at the time. Nigel Lawson, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, told the House that he was at a loss to understand the selective importance attached by Labour to the manufacturing sector. Later, in Washington, he warned that the world should not

"be seduced by the wonders of high-tech into overlooking the fact that many of the jobs of the future will be in labour intensive service industries which are not so much low-tech as no-tech".

To be fair to the Government, no one could claim that they fell victim to the high-tech seduction. Far from it; they have let the country become a total pushover for

[Mr. Dobson]

everybody else's high-tech exports. The Government encouraged banks to invest in service industries and not to give priority to manufacturing, not that the bankers needed much encouragement. When it comes to short-sighted stupidity, it is a toss-up whether the British banks or the British Government take first place.

The banks invested tens of billions of pounds in property speculation. The Government encouraged them to invest in Canary Wharf, by giving its Canadian owners £370 million of taxpayers' money. It still went bust, and the banks lost a fortune. The banks then went round their small and medium-sized business customers calling in loans, ending overdraft facilities and refusing money needed for expansion. That was not because small and medium-sized businesses were getting things wrong but because the banks had got things wrong and needed to recoup the money that they had lost in property speculation. That sums up what has been wrong with Britain under the Tories. Incompetent financial institutions have been on the make, leaving no funds for companies making useful products.

Manufactured goods can be sold abroad, but there was no chance of selling abroad many of the products of the service industries that the Tories promoted in the 1980s. There is no recorded case in history of anyone exporting a speculative office block. Even now, after all the Tory rundown, when manufacturing has fallen to less than a quarter of our national production, it still contributes no less than two thirds of our overseas earnings and all that the fashionable service industries can do is make up the remaining third.

The neglect of manufacturing shows that, when we stop making things, it does not just mean that Britain cannot export; it means that we have to import goods for our own use. If there is a boom in the high street and in the shopping centres, much of what is bought will be imported goods that we once made for ourselves. It is a fact of life that, when people stop working, they stop producing. The goods that our people stopped producing, our country started importing.

Of course, British-made goods have to be sold abroad, and the Government have made that more difficult by fouling up the arrangements for export credit guarantees, leaving our exporters at a disadvantage, as the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) said. The Government have resorted to much-publicised overseas visits which have more to do with photo opportunities for Tory Ministers than with sales opportunities for British firms. The Prime Minister seems to have taken on that mantle from his predecessor. The theory was that trade follows the flag. The trouble is that their trade follows our flag.

The Prime Minister went on a much-publicised visit to China and that was really good for exports—Chinese exports. Since the right hon. Gentleman became Prime Minister, Chinese exports to Britain have doubled. It is easy for a country that uses child labour to compete. There is a rumour that the Chinese embassy has asked for one of the Prime Minister's new honours nomination forms, because the Chinese want to nominate our Prime Minister for services to their exports.

The Prime Minister also visited Hong Kong, and from that visit it was easy to judge his commitment to British exporters. He was supposed to meet our trade representative in Hong Kong, the man who is responsible for trying to export our goods to Hong Kong. The Prime Minister cancelled that appointment, because he had a more pressing one. He wanted to meet the crooked Hong Kong man, Li Ka Shing, to touch him for money for the Tory party. As usual, that Tory Minister put the vested interests of the Tory party before the interests of this country. That is the attitude that has helped to get our economy into its present dreadful state.

The attitude of successive Secretaries of State for Employment has not helped. What a useless lot they have been; but the most recent ones take the prize. They have devoted themselves to fiddling the figures and then perverting the English language to present the figures in a favourable light. Over the past three years, unemployment has risen inexorably, but we would never guess that from the monthly press releases issued by the Secretary of State.

The one for June 1991 was headed:

"Michael Howard welcomes slow down in unemployment increase".

The total was then 2·2 million. In August 1991, he declared:

"this is further evidence that the worst of the recession is over".

He said that on the ground that

"In each of the last 3 months the increase has been well below that of each of the previous 3 months".

That meant that the total had risen to 2·3 million.

In September 1991 the Secretary of State said:

"Today's figures confirm that the recession is coming to an end".

The total had hit 2·4 million. After similar statements in intervening months, in December 1991 the then Secretary of State for Employment proclaimed:

"The rate at which unemployment is increasing remains on a firmly downward trend".

This Nostradamus of the press release claimed to detect "many encouraging signs that the recession is coming to an end".

That meant that the total had hit 2·5 million.

January saw the promulgation of a job seekers charter. Whatever happened to that? In February, every jobless person was promised an individual back-to-work plan. That would have consumed a lot of paper, because the total then stood at 2·6 million.

After the general election, the right hon. and learned Gentleman was succeeded by the present Secretary of State. She, to be fair, brought to the job a reputation for decency and common sense. But, sad to relate, she succumbed to the temptations of that monthly press release.

Perhaps it is not the fault of Ministers after all. Perhaps they have a rogue word processor which thrives on bent statistics, weasel words and daft predictions. In future, when they produce the monthly unemployment figures, they should not just run the spell-check on the word processor, they should lash it up to a polygraph lie detector because that is the only way that we shall ever have the truth.

In April, the right hon. Lady detected "glimmers of hope" in the figure that then stood at 2·65 million. By June she was reduced to welcoming

"a slow down in the rate of increase."

The total then stood at 2·7 million.

In July, "Gypsy Rose Gillian" looked into her crystal ball to discern

"encouraging signs in today's unemployment figures."

In August she talked of "signs of improvement". By October, with the figure at 2·76 million, she got round to expressing deep concern

"about the personal hardship of unemployed people and their families."

Then came a bit of newspeak in the same press release of which George Orwell would have been proud. She said that the task of her Department was

"to provide unemployed people with the skills and job experience necessary to keep them in touch with the changing labour market."

By November, that changing labour market had left 2·9 million people on the dole. Since then it has kept changing, always for the worse, and the total now exceeds 3 million. Apart from issuing misleading press releases, the Secretary of State has done nothing.

The Government are keen on league tables—league tables for schools, hospitals and now for the police forces. League tables, the Tories say, present useful information in a form that is easy to understand and from which it is easy to judge performance. Well, here goes.

Britain is top of the European Community league table for unemployment. Britain has more people out of work than any other EC country. Britain is the only country in the Community with more than 3 million people out of work. Britain has the fastest rising unemployment in Europe. Under the Tories, Britain is top of the table and, unless things change dramatically, it is likely to stay that way.

Britain simply cannot afford that level of unemployment. The Secretary of State has admitted that it costs the taxpayer £9,000 to keep somebody out of work for a year. Our level of unemployment is costing taxpayers £27 billion each year, equal to a tax of £1,225 for every family in the land.

But that is not the end of the story. When people are not working, they are not producing. At the present official level of unemployment, Britain is losing 3 million working days' production every day, 15 million days a week and 780 million working days a year.

We cannot afford to lose production on that scale. It means that our economy is not firing on all cylinders. It means that we are losing more than £50 billion-worth of goods and services, equal to a tax of £2,275 for every family in the land. Having 3 million people out of work is costing every family in the land a total of £3,500 in lost tax and lost production. It is the economics of the madhouse. Its other name is the free market.

The Government have done nothing to end the catastrophic rise in the jobless total. The Secretary of State and the Prime Minister keep bleating that all the conditions are in place for an economic revival. That is not true. Even if it were, I pass on to them a warning from my medically learned and hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith), who pointed out to me that, when someone is in a coma, all the conditions necessary for them to come round are in place—but it does not automatically follow that they will come round.

The Secretary of State and the Prime Minister are fond of stating that they have in place the largest ever range of help for the unemployed. That may also be in place, but it certainly is not working. The number of training places available has contracted as the number of jobless have grown. Since 1990, two fifths of employment training places have disappeared. Even the chances of someone who has been on an ET course getting a job are one in five—exactly the same as someone who has not undergone that training; that is despite the phenomenal expense of employment training. The average cost per trainee, according to a parliamentary answer, is £6,014. At that rate—and I checked this—an individual could undergo a postgraduate course in nuclear physics or be a full-time student at a postgraduate medical research institute.

Youth training places have been cut by one fifth since January 1990, and only half of all YT leavers were in a job six months later. Although YT is compulsory for out-of-work 16 and 17-year-olds, it has proved so unattractive that 111,000 of them are not in training, education or work.

For the past six months, the Secretary of State has recognised that the existing scheme is a shambles and has promised new schemes. She has announced them every month for the last six months—*[Interruption.]*

Hon. Members: New figures—another press release.

Mr. Dobson: Whether from the word processor or the calculator, they have just arrived—and no doubt they have been seasonally adjusted.

The Secretary of State announced those changes every month—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Dobson: You must recognise, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that masters of mime can amuse all sorts of people.

The Secretary of State has announced new measures every month for the past six months, but they have still not been introduced. Since the right hon. Lady took over, 3·5 million people have tasted unemployment. If Florence Nightingale was the lady with the lamp, the Secretary of State has become the lady with the P45. For all her fine words, she has done nothing to get more people back to work or into top-quality training.

The Prime Minister decided that the Secretary of State for Employment was making such a poor fist of it that Lord Wakeham was wheeled in to sort things out. I have to warn the Secretary of State that if he makes as good a job of that as he did of electricity privatisation, the right hon. Lady should watch it—she may well inherit a shambles as big as the pit closure programme that the President of the Board of Trade inherited from the same Lord Wakeham.

The Government say that they will announce in the Budget new measures to help the unemployed. Given their track record, it is a good bet that any new Tory measures will have less to do with the unemployed than with fiddling the unemployment figures.

There are overwhelming economic reasons for making the forthcoming Budget a Budget for jobs. The Government must put full employment, which the Prime Minister says he supports, at the top of the economic agenda—not just in Britain, but across the whole European Community.

If people are not convinced by the economic arguments of the need for full employment, they should be convinced by the political imperatives. Right across Europe, millions are out of work. Far too many of them are young people. They want jobs. If the respective political parties of the left, centre and centre-right in Europe do not give them jobs, those people will look elsewhere.

[Mr. Dobson]

Unemployment has always been the principal recruiting sergeant of the violent, racist, anti-semitic parties of the far right. With political instability and the rise of neo-fascism in Italy, with the resurgence of neo-Nazism in Germany, with the neo-falangists reappearing in Spain, with Le Pen in France and with far-right racist groups flexing their muscles here in Britain, it is time for a bold commitment to full employment. That cannot be achieved quickly, and it cannot be achieved in one country; but, with democracy itself at stake, full employment must be the aim, and it must be achieved.

This Tory Government have not the understanding, the energy or the vision to bring about the necessary changes. The plain fact is that the Government have no idea how to get our country out of the mess in which they have landed it. They have not got an economic strategy; they have not got an industrial strategy; they have not got an employment strategy. In fact, they have not got a clue.

9.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): This has been a good debate, featuring some remarkable contributions from hon. Members on both sides of the House. Sadly and inevitably, it has been characterised by the now customary running down of British industry and British achievement by Opposition Front Benchers: as always, they have revelled in the existence of any difficulties, while hating to point to any successes. They never tire of talking Britain down. At some points, their stance has provided an interesting contrast with the speeches of some of their own Back Benchers.

Both the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) spoke of the need for a change of culture, a greater awareness of the importance of manufacturing, and the part that education could play in all that. My hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne drew attention to the importance of the new framework provided by the national curriculum. Let me add to the points that he made, while encouraging the right hon. Member for Halton.

As my hon. Friend is no doubt aware, general national vocational qualifications are now available to more than 9,000 young people, and that availability will gradually be spread across the cohort. *The Guardian*—in the surprised tones so characteristic of that newspaper—has said:

"The Government seems to have a success on its hands with GNVQs."

As my hon. Friend will know, GNVQs are equivelant to two A-levels, and are certainly doing their bit to change the culture in our schools.

Following our teacher placement schemes, one third of the 75,000 teachers who have been placed in industry for short periods have been placed in manufacturing, working closely with the Confederation of British Industry and its national manufacturing council. Our work with education business partnerships and Compact now covers 700 schools, 10,000 employers and 140,000 young people—and, of course, the very existence of training and enterprise councils spreads the message about the importance of manufacturing right across our society.

The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) asked about apprenticeships. Let me tell him that 400 apprenticeships are in existence very close to him, at County Durham TEC: he may well wish to visit the TEC, and see a good example of successful youth training in action.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was realistic enough to point out that, given the development of new technology, an expansion in the manufacturing base would not necessarily result in a huge increase in the number of jobs, but should increase the skills of the work force. Let me tell the hon. Gentleman that 76 per cent. of our work force now have qualifications. Two million more people have relevant vocational qualifications than five years ago, and 2·5 million more have A-levels or qualifications above that level. I hope, due to his interest in these matters, that the hon. Gentleman is giving every possible support to Investors in People.

I was most interested to hear at first hand from my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) of the work of the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance and of the goodwill message that he had received from the Prime Minister. I am sure that he will not expect me to comment on his Budget representations, but I am certain that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will have taken careful note of them. He will also have taken careful note of the customary representation by the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey), because of his very well placed concern for the excellent product that is made in his constituency and the duties applied thereon.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) will have heard the points made by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade about the developments in his review of the pit closure programme, including the point that the White Paper is to be published shortly. The hon. Gentleman will know that enhanced area status has already been announced for Barnsley and Doncaster. I was glad to hear that he welcomed the arrival of new jobs in his constituency. The hon. Gentleman knows that last week I was in his constituency and that I visited the very dynamic training and enterprise council for Barnsley and Doncaster. It is doing excellent work. It has already done a great deal of work in preparation for possible pit closures, should they take place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) rightly pointed out that any successful economy needs a range of employment. It needs manufacturing industries; it needs service industries. My hon. Friend will know that, in common with other countries, the service sector grew during the 1980s. That growth very much mirrors what has happened elsewhere. In the United States, the service sector has risen from 63 per cent. to 69 per cent., and in Germany from 54 per cent. to nearly 60 per cent.

I was most interested to hear the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) speak so warmly in defence of free trade. He clearly has not spoken recently to his hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), but no doubt they will sort that out between them at some future stage. That is merely one example of what is writ large on the Opposition Front Bench in terms of different messages from different spokesmen, a point to which I shall turn shortly. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the stance on this side is entirely uniform. We always support free trade, whether we are working in GATT, in the Social Affairs Council or elsewhere. A little more

support from the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends when we try to achieve level playing fields when working in the Social Affairs Council would be very welcome.

Over the weekend, the Prime Minister asked when the Leader of the Opposition last said a good word about Britain. We on this side are entitled to ask the same question tonight. When did the hon. Members for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and for Holborn and St. Pancras last say a good word about Britain? The hon. Member for Livingston was not present throughout the debate. Had he been, he would have heard a number of fair-minded comments from his hon. Friends. It seems strange to me that there is little interchange of view or of rhetoric among Opposition Members.

We certainly did not hear the hon. Members for Livingston and for Holborn and St. Pancras tonight say a good word about Britain. During the debate they have not said one word about the outstanding productivity achievements of British workers, nor one word about the record export sales achieved by British industry in overseas markets, or about the high level of investment in manufacturing industry by British business. There was not one word of recognition or encouragement for the men and women in manufacturing industry achieving successes day by day in the most difficult of world economic conditions.

The Front-Bench spokesmen do not wish to acknowledge success——

Mr. Chisholm: The Minister referred to productivity and exports. The reason why productivity may not have been mentioned is that it is easy to improve productivity by throwing thousands of people on to the dole. Productivity has increased, but output has not, purely because of unemployment. Surely the significant export figure is the deficit in manufactured trade. What was the deficit in manufactured goods in 1979, and what was it last year in the depths of a recession? It was £9·9 billion.

Mrs. Shephard: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to muse on the contribution to productivity made by the Labour Government, with their overmanning and the endless succession of days lost through strikes.

Opposition Members do not want to acknowledge success; they want to wallow in imaginary failure. They want to ignore the facts, but the facts are what they will get. First, I shall give them the facts on investment. The United Kingdom has an unrivalled record in attracting investment from overseas. In the year to March 1992 alone, foreign companies launched more than 330 new investment projects in Britain, which created more than 22,000 jobs and safeguarded 30,000 more.

Of course, every time a redundancy is announced, Opposition Members want to raise the matter in the House —but do we ever hear a word from them about the 50,000 jobs created in a year by foreign companies investing in Britain? Never. But we do hear some words from them about foreign investment. Those words are "alien, perverse and undemocratic". Those are the TUC's words. Again and again, I have challenged Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen to disown those words, and I am happy to do so again now.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) *rose*——

Mrs. Shephard: Ah, the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington is going to do it for them.

Ms. Abbott: Like her hon. Friends, the Minister has spoken about the amount of inward investment. Does she not accept that one of the main attractions for Japanese and other investors is the fact that British wages are only 44 per cent. of west German wages? What long-term future is there for British industry as a low-wage assembly point for Japanese industry?

Mrs. Shephard: I wonder how the hon. Lady would describe the events surrounding the moving of jobs from Dijon to Cambuslang, where wages were similar. On-costs for German employers are indeed 61 per cent. higher than they are here, so it is small wonder that we attract inward investment.

I note that Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen are not willing to disown the words of the TUC—"alien, perverse, and undemocratic". I suppose that they cannot afford to offend their union paymasters. Until they do that——

Mr. Robin Cook: The right hon. Lady has shifted her ground. Three minutes ago, she accused Opposition Members of using those words, but now she attributes them to the TUC. Will she now produce the official TUC document from which she is quoting? Will she tell us from which official document those words were taken? Will she admit that she is quoting one member of the TUC, who is not, and never has been, a member of the Labour party, and who is not eligible to join?

Mrs. Shephard: I do not suppose that the hon. Gentleman has noticed, but the whole Labour party has been trying to shift its ground on all those areas of policy. I can indeed answer the hon. Gentleman. I expect that he was present when the words were spoken at the TUC conference in 1991. I am not sure which union sponsors him, but I have no doubt that he was present when the words were spoken.

Mr. Cook: The right hon. Lady has made a serious allegation. Will she please name a single member of the Labour party who has used those words, or withdraw her allegation?

Mrs. Shephard: Perhaps I could remind the hon. Gentleman of what I said—the only words we hear about such investment are "alien, perverse and undemocratic". Let him disown the TUC's words. I note that he has not done so.

Mr. Cook: The right hon. Lady has failed to answer the question. Will she name the member of the Labour party to whom she attributes those words, or withdraw the allegations that she has made in the House?

Mrs. Shephard: I have asked the hon. Gentleman to disown the words, and he is not willing to do so.

Mr. Cook: There is no difficulty about that—those words have never been used by any member of the Labour party and they are not words with which I would associate myself. I do not understand what the right hon. Lady finds so entertaining about the matter. She has grotesquely misled the House. Will she withdraw her earlier assertion, or name the member of the Labour party to whom she attributes those words?

Mrs. Shephard: I made it perfectly clear that those words were spoken by a TUC member. I asked Opposition Members to disown them, and the hon. Gentleman has done so.

Mr. Cook: The right hon. Lady will now do the House the credit of admitting that she has attempted a smear, which has no substance, and in which she has been caught out.

Mrs. Shephard: My goodness, an accusation of a smear from the hon. Gentleman is a compliment indeed.

Let us consider for a moment that so-called "alien, perverse and undemocratic" foreign investment. In 1991, one third of all inward investment in the European Community came to Britain. More than 35 per cent. of total United States investment in Europe is located in the United Kingdom, and total investment from Japan is more than 40 per cent.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) asked why firms come to this country. It is not because of the weather or because of the Opposition. Firms do not have to come here. They are free to locate anywhere, yet they choose to come here because unit costs are low and under control, because this country's strike record is lower than it has ever been in our history, and because we have an attractive tax structure, with the lowest corporation tax in the developed world. Above all, they come because—apparently unlike the Labour party—they believe in Britain.

We welcome inward investors because they create jobs in Britain: 15 per cent. of all jobs in manufacturing industry are in foreign-owned firms. The jobs are welcome to the people who work for those firms, but the benefits of inward investment are not confined to people directly employed in American, Japanese or European businesses which have come here. In the past three years, inward investors have brought more than 50 per cent. of their equipment in the United Kingdom. All that means more business and more jobs for Britain.

Those jobs have gone to all parts of Britain. Scotland, Wales and the north-east of England have done especially well, and more than half the jobs created by inward investors between 1987 and 1990 went to those areas. My hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Mr. Richards) described very well the effect of such inward investment.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Shephard: I shall not give way for the moment, as I wish to make progress.

In every country, the share of gross domestic product taken by manufacturing is falling. That is the case in Germany, the United States of America, France and Italy, as well as in Britain, and it reflects changes in methods of production and the organisation of business.

But this should not be allowed to conceal the underlying performance of business. British manufacturing industry has had a decade of success in the 1980s. In the 1960s and 1970s, when Opposition Members and their trade union paymasters directed our affairs, British industry was at the bottom of the international league table for productivity. What a contrast with the 1980s, when manufacturing output rose by 22 per cent., and productivity by almost 60 per cent. Last year alone, despite adverse world trading conditions, productivity reached record levels. It is now rising at 6 per cent. a year. This is good news for industry, good news for those who work in industry and good news for Britain.

Manufacturing Exports grew by over 50 per cent. in the 1980s. They now stand at their highest level ever. Car exports have more than doubled since 1986. We are a net exporter of chemical goods, and we are a net exporter of pharmaceutical goods, with exports growing by 18 per cent. in 1992. These successes are the result of policies aimed at encouraging enterprise, providing incentives, sweeping away unnecessary regulations and reducing burdens on business.

That is why foreign investment is coming to this country. But there are also other reasons: interest rates are the lowest in Europe; inflation at 1·7 per cent. is the lowest since 1967; unit wage costs are growing more slowly than in Japan and more slowly than in Germany; and labour costs in manufacturing are 61 per cent. of those in Germany. These are the necessary conditions for economic growth at any time and in any country. If the Opposition have not understood that, they will never understand anything.

But, of course, unemployment is difficult for anyone who faces it, and we have got to have effective help to offer to unemployed people. That is why we are creating 1·5 million opportunities for unemployed people—a wider range than has ever been provided before. But we never hear a word of praise for the Employment Service. Nearly 50,000 dedicated staff, with a budget of over £1 billion, work, day in, day out, to help people to find new jobs. Last year, they placed over 1·5 million people in jobs—6,000 each and every working day. Do we ever hear a word of praise for the training and enterprise councils—82 local groups of business people, working to provide the training that individuals and industry need?

Instead of recognising those achievements, Opposition Members prefer to preach a message of despair to unemployed people. Most people leave unemployment very quickly—over half within three months, and two thirds within six months. That is the message we should be getting across to people who have lost their jobs—a clear message that there are jobs out there, that training and enterprise councils and jobcentres are there to help people to get back to work.

It would be wonderful if, just for once, the Opposition helped to get that message across. Instead, they add to the despair of people who have lost their jobs by encouraging them to believe they will never work again. The extraordinary exaggerations and assertions of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras were over the top, even for him. That is, of course, typical of the crocodile tears from the Opposition Benches. Instead of giving hope to people who have lost their jobs, they spread despair.

Fortunately, no one takes any notice of them. They are all preaching different messages. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras wants to put a tax on jobs; the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) claims to be concerned for the small business man; but the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) has never really repudiated his pre-election tax plans, and still has not abolished the trade union block vote.

But they all have one thing in common: the policies on which they do agree would destroy jobs. They denigrate business. They are hostile to employers. The hon. Member

for Holborn and St. Pancras has now added to his description of employers as "scum" his description of bankers as short-sighted, stupid and on the make. Opposition Members tell foreign business men—people coming here to invest their wealth in factories—that they are alien. What impact does that have on business confidence? What impact does it have in the board rooms of companies in America, Japan and Hong Kong?

The Opposition would introduce a national minimum wage. How many jobs would that destroy? They would sign up to the social charter. How many jobs would that destroy? They would put a training levy on employers. How many jobs would that destroy? Their latest idea is to subsidise jobs by taxing the utilities. What a message. Every time one made a success of one's own enterprise, one would be taxed.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:-

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 302.

Division No. 176] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'lle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*

Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Andrew Mackinlay.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David.
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy

Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments):—*

The House divided: Ayes 297, Noes 259.

Division No. 177] **[10.13 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark

Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stratford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House recognises the importance of the manufacturing base to the wealth creation process in this country; congratulates Her Majesty's Government on setting in place the basic framework for economic recovery—low inflation, low interest rates, good industrial relations and a low tax regime—supported by measures in the Autumn Statement; applauds Her Majesty's Government on its success in attracting more inward investment than any of the United Kingdom's Community partners; acknowledges the widely reported signs of recovery in business confidence; recognises the unparalleled opportunities to help individuals to get back to work; and looks forward with confidence to the prospect of a return to sustained growth.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. May I draw your

attention to the fact that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) and I were completing a conversation in the No Lobby and, as we were about to come out, the tellers had disappeared. While I would not want to question the vote, may I ask you to put it on the record that we were present and wished to vote?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members should be much more responsible than to spend their time gossiping in the Lobbies.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Madam Speaker: May, by leave of the House, put together motions Nos. 2 to 20? [HON. MEMBERS: "Object."] In that case, let us take it stage by stage.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft British Railways Board (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

The House divided: Ayes 185, Noes 13.

Division No. 178] **[10.26 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Cann, Jamie
Cohen, Harry
Davidson, Ian
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Lewis, Terry
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Simpson, Alan
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft British Telecommunications plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

The House divided: Ayes 152, Noes 15.

Division No. 179] **[10.37 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Blackburn, Dr John G.

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Congdon, David
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Tony
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Davidson, Ian
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Welsh, Andrew
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): We now come to motion No. 4.

Mr. Andrew MacKay (Berkshire, East): Not moved, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Do I take it that the remaining motions, up to and including No. 21, are not moved?

Mr. MacKay: Not moved, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Public Lending Right

10.48 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Robert Key): I beg to move,

That the draft Public Lending Right (Increase of Limit) Order 1933, which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

As the House will know, the public lending right has always been broadly supported by hon. Members of all parties. It was introduced—following many years of campaigning by authors for some financial reward in recognition of the use made of their books by public libraries—by the Public Lending Right Act 1979, which had all-party support. The Act conferred on authors a new right of payment in respect of the loan of their books to the public, in accordance with a scheme to be designed.

The actual scheme, which was approved by Parliament in 1981, provides for authors who have registered their books under the Act to receive payments in proportion to the number of times their books are lent from public libraries. The payments to authors and the costs of administration are both met from the single PLR central fund, which currently stands at £4·75 million, having last been increased in 1991 from £3·5 million.

Under the Public Lending Right Act 1979, an increase in the fund requires an order in the form of a statutory instrument to be laid before the House of Commons and approved by resolution of the House before the start of the financial year in which it is to take place. The order before the House authorises an increase in the fund of more than 5 per cent., from £4·75 million in this financial year to £5 million from the financial year 1993-94.

The proposed increase recognises the costs of a new computer and seeks to maintain the real level of the rate per loan paid to authors. The rate per loan is calculated each year by the registrar. The aggregate sum available to authors is divided by an estimated national aggregate of loans. Both this aggregate and the estimated total loans for each book are derived by extrapolating the figures from a rotating sample of 30 libraries in the United Kingdom. The order in respect of this year's rate per loan was laid before Parliament in December, and increased the rate from 1.81p to 1.86p.

This sum may seem small, and most payments to authors are indeed modest. But it was never intended that PLR payments to authors should provide a main source of income. Nevertheless, 18,000 authors will receive a payment this year. Ninety-seven authors will qualify for the maximum payment of £6,000. However, the larger part of the fund continues to go to less well known and up-and-coming authors. We know from the number of letters sent to the registrar at this time of year when the payments are made that these payments are widely welcomed by authors.

The scheme is complex to administer, but it is efficiently managed by the registrar, Dr. Parker, and his valiant staff at Stockton-on-Tees. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage visited the PLR at Stockton-on-Tees on 11 February. I know how impressed he was by the dedication and professionalism of the staff and by the remarkable achievements.

Actual payments to authors this year account for 83 per cent. of the total PLR expenditure. As I mentioned earlier, some new expenditure on information technology is now needed. The operation is totally dependent on computerisation, and the new system will replace the original computer, installed in 1982. It will bring the benefits of additional storage capacity for issues data which are being received from a growing number of sample libraries. It will improve the registrar's ability to establish direct computer links with local authority systems, giving access for their staff to the PLR computer database through an office network providing faster and more sophisticated on-line search facilities.

This year's recent payment of just under £4 million to authors marks the 10th anniversary of the scheme's first payment. Over the 10-year period, the payments amount to almost £30 million. These payments are not an end in their own right. They are designed to ensure that authors receive recompense for the free provision of their books to the public by libraries. That free public library provision is crucial in fostering a literate, informed public, and with this my Department's overall aim of making more widely accessible the rich and varied cultural heritage of this nation can be achieved. Public libraries lend well over half a billion books a year—10 for every man, woman and child in the United Kingdom.

The public lending right is a well established part of that crucial system, and I commend the order to the House.

10.53 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): As the Minister made clear, the public lending right principle is supported in all parts of the House. The notion that an author should be rewarded for the frequency with which his or her books are borrowed is sensible. We welcome this modest increase in expenditure from £4·75 million to £5 million. We also welcome the improvements in efficiency that have occurred since the new computer system was installed. We trust that it will reduce the proportion of expenditure that is spent on administration and increase the amounts that go to authors. All hon. Members will, I believe, support that aim.

This small but positive increase in the public lending right cannot be allowed to obscure the negative consequences of the Government's policies towards public libraries over the past 14 years. The Minister would not expect me to pass over that issue in such a debate. The House has little opportunity to discuss libraries and it is only right and proper that the Minister should be made aware of the strength of public feeling on the issue.

I shall quote from *The Guardian* on 3 March——

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: Yes, in a moment.

The quotation is from Councillor John Lock, of Newham council in London. He describes the dilemma in which many councils now find themselves:

"Councils with appalling financial problems can only balance their budgets by making cuts. Under the new system of local government finance, there is no other option.

The severity of the impact comes about where budgets are reduced year after year. In some cases, the damage now exposed is the result of eight years of cutting.

Nobody defends library cuts. Nobody, for that matter, defends cuts in the arts, museums, sports, music services, theatre, youth services . . . the list goes on, to the extent that no area is exempt from attempts to find "savings". It is far from just libraries.

[Mrs. Clwyd]

But cuts happen because local councils are trying to operate an impossible system which demands accountability to voters on one hand and Government on the other. And it is the central state which wins hands down.

Even Conservative-controlled boroughs have begun to experience the effects of Whitehall's grip on their budgets. This is presumably why John Major has begun to make cooing noises about a more peaceful relationship with local councils. However, soft soap won't save a single library book until government undoes the system of local government finance it has painstakingly constructed.

Local people want their councils to be the protectors and nurterers of cultural services they have been for a century or more, with a far better record than central government. But we now work under a regime which enforces an emphasis on vicious pruning. Any gardener could tell Mr. Major the only thing his methods are going to produce is a cultural desert. What we need is re-investment and the ability to respond to the demands of our voters."

[Interruption.] If the hon. Member who is speaking from a sedentary position had been here from the beginning of the debate, he would have heard who wrote the letter. It was a local councillor who has to make the decisions that all our councillors have to make when they try to find out how to make the best deal they can for the people whom they represent, in the face of the cuts imposed on them by the Government.

Sir Roger Moate: The debate is about public lending right, not library budgets, so I am not sure why the hon. Lady is holding forth about libraries. Is she perhaps assuming that the public lending right moneys in some way detract from the sum available for libraries? When the legislation was introduced, we were given categorical assurances from spokesmen on both sides of the House that public lending right funding would in no way take funds away from the library system.

Mrs. Clwyd: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman cannot see the correlation between the two subjects. If he looked at the draft statutory instrument he would see that the heading was "Libraries". If the hon. Gentleman cannot see the link, I am sorry but I cannot explain it more positively than that.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Clwyd: No, I should like to develop what I have to say for a moment, but I shall certainly give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): But not now.

Mrs. Clwyd: We face a systematic rundown of a vital public service——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Lady, but I am afraid that that subject is way off beam. The debate is about the order.

Mrs. Clwyd: I listen to what you say, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I would point out again that the order is headed, "Libraries".

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The order is entitled "Public Lending Right", which is not the same thing as libraries.

Mrs. Clwyd: I shall not argue, Madam Deputy Speaker, and of course I hear what you say.

The situation in public libraries is now so grave that the public lending right may well be seriously affected. Many local authorities are unable to offer the comprehensive and efficient library service that they are obliged to offer, under the public library——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry but that is definitely out of order. The hon. Lady must relate her remarks to the specific contents of the order.

Mrs. Clwyd: The public lending right is obviously related to the books in libraries. To cater properly for the needs of communities, the books lent by them need to be available six days a week, both in the mornings and evenings. The decline in the number of libraries that open for 60 hours each week has been dramatic.

In 1974-75, 229 libraries were open for 60 hours a week.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but I have already explained to the hon. Lady that the line that she is taking is out of order. I must ask her to discontinue that aspect of her speech.

Mrs. Clwyd: I find it difficult to understand your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I shall attempt to proceed with my argument. Clearly, the public lending right is closely related to the number of books lent from libraries, so I cannot see how I can talk about that right without referring to libraries.

During the past 13 years, book funds have failed to keep pace with inflation, while the number of titles has risen substantially. That has also occurred at a time when libraries are increasingly expected to stock non-print materials, such as cassettes, compact discs, videos and computer data bases.

Between 1980-81 and 1990-91, the real purchasing power of public library book funds declined by 16·5 per cent., compared to the bookseller's average price index. Obviously, that has considerable impact on the public lending right.

Opposition Members are also very concerned about the implications of compulsory competitive tendering for the public lending right and for libraries.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but this is intolerable. The hon. Lady must relate her speech to the order that we are considering, and as I understand it that relates to the sum of money paid out from a central fund —it has nothing to do with local authorities. The hon. Lady must have regard to whether she thinks that the extra sum that is being made available is adequate. That would be in order, but a general discussion of library provision is not.

Mrs. Clwyd: May I respectfully point out, Madam Deputy Speaker, that not all libraries are run by local authorities.

Soon after being appointed, the Secretary of State asserted:

"Public libraries should be open, as far as possible"—

I assume that he also meant other libraries that are not run by local authorities—

"where and when the community wants them."

Does not the Minister agree that these sentiments, laudible though they may be, are fanciful and will remain so while the Government fail to provide libraries and local authorities with proper funding? As in so many other areas of policy——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Does not the hon. Lady understand the purport of what I have said to her? This is out of order, and I cannot allow it to continue.

Mrs. Clwyd: In that case, I shall draw my remarks to a close by saying that any further cuts in such services will be made in the face of united opposition from the Opposition and from millions of people up and down the country.

11.6 pm

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): It is a very long time since I spoke about the public lending right. Indeed, I believe that my last speech on the subject was made in 1982, since when there have been very few debates about it. I was the Minister who introduced the order that finally led to the public lending right's coming into force. I do not claim much credit for that, as the work had all been done by my predecessors. Nevertheless, the purpose was a useful one. We had no opposition, although I occasionally suspected that my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) was less keen on the proposal than were some others. However, I may be totally unjustified in saying so. My hon. Friend will be able, in due course, to explain his position.

The public lending right was bipartisan and, despite the speech of the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), the principle remains bipartisan—tripartisan, in view of the magnificent attendance of Liberals. A high proportion of them are present and I congratulate them. This development represents a great step forward. However, the legislation, which was introduced by a Labour Government, was not the greatest piece of drafting known to man. Indeed, it was rushed through Parliament almost in the last 24 hours before the 1979 general election.

Mr. Snape: There were a few things on our minds.

Mr. Channon: Indeed, there were one or two things on the minds of people in the Labour and Conservative parties as the legislation was going through.

However, the Conservative Government of the day managed to use what was a very defective Act to get the vehicle on the road. I am delighted that it has stood the test of time and that its few critics have at least remained silent. Whether they are still critics I am not sure. The system has worked and authors have benefited.

I should like to put a few questions to the Minister. I want, first, to take up a point that my hon. Friend made in his introduction. My recollection is that the first samples were taken from about 16 libraries. We have heard that the number is now 30. That is very good. The greater the number of public libraries sampled, the more likely it is that we shall get a representative list. In this regard, is there rotation? There used to be, to the extent of one quarter annually, in order that the sample might be brought up to date. We should be able to assume that in Newcastle or Bromley, or wherever, the sample is wide enough to ensure that authors get a fair deal.

My next question—here I am glad that some of my hon. Friends are not present—concerns European residents in the United Kingdom. Do such people who are authors receive the benefits of public lending rights? If so, are there now reciprocal rights for British residents in the rest of the Communities? That is a matter on which we worked very hard. I believe that, very shortly after I left the Department, the system came into force between the United Kingdom and what was then West Germany. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to say a word or two about that matter. I hope that I am not asking too many technical questions. If necessary, my hon. Friend can write to me. Do British authors who live elsewhere in the European Communities receive the same benefits as those who live in the United Kingdom?

I read with some surprise something about the aims of the registrar. I think that it is in my right hon. Friend's excellent booklet describing the annual report of the Department of National Heritage, which itself deserves to qualify for public lending right. One of the aims of these extra funds is to harmonise public lending right schemes throughout the European Communities. I cannot see why that should be done. Surely this falls squarely within the definition of subsidiarity, which the House debated at some length last night and will no doubt debate at even greater length on Thursday. If there is to be such harmonisation, perhaps my hon. Friend can tell us about the proposal, why we need harmonisation and what sort it will be. It may be a good thing, but I have my doubts.

Another question that was debated at the time of the introduction of the public lending right related to children's books, because many authors of those books felt that the qualifying number of pages was so high that their books would not always be eligible for PLR. Has that problem been resolved? Are the editors of reference books eligible for PLR? It would be interesting to know the answer. I read somewhere that the Department or the registrar aimed to do more about such books. Do illustrators and editors in general qualify for PLR? The scheme has now been running for about 11 years, and those questions should be reconsidered, if they have not been recently, to ensure that fairness is achieved.

I understand that a new computer has been installed and that, to some extent, it has reduced the proportion of money going to the authors. May we assume that that is a temporary arrangement and that the high proportion of money that had gone to authors will, once again, be paid to them? As part of the authors charter, perhaps my hon. Friend can try to get that proportion up to 90 per cent. of the total sum. It has reached the high 80s, but it has never struck 90 per cent. In the next few years, one of the aims of the scheme might be to ensure that the proportion paid to authors increases still more.

I welcome the increase in PLR. I congratulate my right hon. and hon. Friends on increasing it. I hope that that will benefit many authors. It would be interesting to learn from the Under-Secretary—I do not think that it is private information—which authors get the main benefits from the system. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth), with his usual omniscience and his new contacts with the Treasury, will be able to tell us who they are. I shall listen to him with interest.

I congratulate the Government on increasing the PLR in a difficult public expenditure climate. I hope that the scheme will continue to do the good work that it has done for more than a decade.

11.12 pm

Mr. Iain Sproat (Harwich): I am sorry that I feel compelled to enter a gently discordant note into the debate.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): Gentle.

Mr. Sproat: Yes, I assure my right hon. Friend that it is very gentle.

I note that my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) is in the Chamber and he will remember the ferocious debates that we had in the House back in the 1970s when, if I recall correctly, the Public Lending Right Bill was almost the only Government Bill that was defeated by Opposition Back Benchers. Perhaps my hon. Friend can clarify my memory on that.

I object to the principle of the PLR not because I wish to do hard-working authors out of money—I would be eligible for PLR, but I have declined to register on principle.

Mr. Snape: How many books has the hon. Gentleman sold?

Mr. Sproat: One of my books has been selling for 10 years, with 10,000 copies sold a year.

Mr. Snape: Has the hon. Gentleman written and sold a book on how to pick a winnable constituency?

Mr. Sproat: I am glad to say that, after much trying, I did manage to do so.

Can my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary tell me how many civil servants, including part-time ones, are involved in the scheme? I know that he said that 16 full-time civil servants were involved, but are any others? My hon. Friend proposes to give £5 million to the scheme, and a high percentage of that goes on administration. Does that sum include expenditure on advisory committees, expenses for members of those committees, of working groups and so on?

In the seventh year, to February 1990, the administrative costs involved in giving moneys to authors stood at 14 per cent. It is a pretty high percentage, and if a charity spent 14 per cent. of what it earned on its own administration, we should say that it was a little bit too much. The following year, 1991, it was 17 per cent. of the money disbursed, and last year it was 26 per cent. It seems to me that, if one sets up a quango and it spends 26 per cent. of the money disbursed on its own administration, that is a pretty high percentage.

I should make it clear to my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench that I do not object to this right from any reasons of philistinism. I spend a great deal of money on books, have a fairly substantial library of my own and use my local public library, but I do not think that this is the best way to encourage authors. If one has £5 million to give, I am amazed that Opposition Members cannot think of a better way to spend it. If one decides to give away £5 million to encourage the arts, I do not think that it is a very sensible way to give it to people like my noble Friend Lord Archer, who is a very rich man already, and who gets £6,000 a year out of the pockets of taxpayers who are very much poorer than he is.

This quango managed to spend 26 per cent. of its money on itself and its equipment, and on giving money to people like Lord Archer, Barbara Cartland or Dick Francis, a wonderful author. I am very happy that he has made a lot of money, but he gets plenty of money out of the royalties that he gets on sales.

Not only that, but it seems to me that, when public lending right was originally set up, hon. Members did not fully understand some of the economics of the publishing company. When a sale is made to a library, the author gets a royalty on that already. There are many books that would not be published at all were it not for the economics of selling to libraries. So authors already get something out of public libraries.

This quango is spending 26 per cent. of money out of the pockets of the taxpayers on itself and its equipment, and it not only gives it to the Jeffrey Archers of this world, but 70 per cent. of authors get less than £100. I ask the House: if we want to encourage literature, is the best way to set up a quango with 16 full-time civil servants, and no doubt part-time civil servants, and all the rest of it, to give 70 per cent. of authors sums of less than £100? That does not seem to me a sensible way to spend the taxpayers' money.

Although I should very much like to see literature encouraged in this country, in a way the House has been taken in. We like to support the arts and literature, but saying that should not mean that we support any scheme that comes along; supporting rich authors who do not need it, while poor authors are getting less than £100 a year. It does not seem to me to be worth it.

Although this debate is not an occasion for a radical root-and-branch examination of public lending right, it seems to me to be based on a fallacious principle. I hope that Ministers will undertake to look again at the scheme and see whether £5 million of public lending right is the best way to encourage more writers in this country.

11.18 pm

Sir Roger Moate (Faversham): The situation is even worse than my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) has just suggested. Of 16,800 authors who received payment, 9,260 received less than £49. That puts a slightly different complexion on the rather glossy presentation we received from my hon. Friend the Minister or from the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd). I am so glad that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich reminded the House of the battles that were fought over the establishment of the so-called principle of the public lending right. I warmly welcome tonight's debate, the 10th anniversary of the introduction of the scheme, which gives us an opportunity to look again at this public lending right and at the expenditure of public money on a scheme that is based on a fallacy.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich was right. I, too, have no objection to the Government or to other patrons dispensing funds to help needy authors; if that is the best use to which the £5 million can be put, so be it. I do object, however, to money being distributed under this scheme to those who do not need it and to giving tiny sums to the many who do need it. I also object to the continued existence of this quango after 10 years—at a time when we are supposed to be trying to eliminate such things. It seems to have become "a good thing", as if that were engraved on tablets of stone. It is not a good thing.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) thought that the system had been set up with little opposition. It is worth recalling, then, that throughout the 1970s there were many attempts to put it on the statute book. In 1976 there was the first serious attempt, by the then Labour Government, to do so. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich, Michael English, a former Labour Member, and I defeated the Bill—

probably the only recorded occasion when Back Benchers have defeated Government legislation. Alas, just before the 1979 election, the measure returned to the House and, with co-operation between Government and Opposition Front Benchers, it became law.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and I were assailed by many authors, who wrote to us in not very literary language, I am afraid to say. I was also attacked —verbally, not physically—by Ministers, who asked me why I had let the Bill go through, even though I had done everything I could to stop it. There was a widespread feeling that the Bill was not as good an idea as had been supposed.

The whole principle behind this expenditure of public money is wrong. The Minister has said that authors should be recompensed for the loan of their books from libraries. He also mentioned that there are 500 million such lendings a year. The point is, of course, that authors have benefited from the sale of their books to the public libraries. Without their purchasing them, many of these books would never have been published in the first place. At the time in question, the public library system disagreed with the argument that public lending was doing down the authors. The reverse is the truth: it is that system which has sustained authorship and helped and encouraged it.

I would not mind these funds being disbursed to authors in some other way, but they have no right to the money on the grounds that the public libraries deprive them of their rightful entitlements. There are many other examples of people creating things, selling them and then not getting paid for them again every time others look at or use them. Artists sell their paintings to galleries; they do not get paid every time someone looks at them thereafter.

The European directive—the idea is apparently spreading across the continent; perhaps its inhabitants deserve it—refers to a rental and lending right. That is an interesting idea. Manufacturers make a product; profit is then made from it; the product is then rented out time and again. The creator of the product does not get paid every time it is used subsequently by someone else.

This false premise has a romantic history, going back to A. P. Herbert. People latched on to it, but that does not mean that it was right. Many of us strongly objected to the forceful arguments that poor authors were being deprived of their rights by the library system.

In addition, an extraordinary quango structure was to be created—a public lending right institution, which would take samples from all over the country and distribute very small sums of money to thousands of authors. For all those reasons, we found the concept seriously flawed and fought it hard. Three of us argued for about 26 hours in Committee, while nobody else said a word.

Nobody will speak at length tonight—we do not have the time—but I still believe we have a wrong principle and that it is the wrong way to distribute money, as a form of patronage, to help authorship. I regret that the fund has grown to £5 million. I shall not oppose the instrument tonight. I simply place on record my continuing dislike of the way in which the public purse is being used to support such a public lending right scheme.

11.25 pm

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): I shall be brief, because we are anxious to get home to our cocoa and bedside reading, our library books.

I must at the outset declare an interest. I am a recipient of public lending right and I have come to the House tonight to say thank you to hon. Members who were here in 1979, when the legislation was passed. I particularly salute my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) for the leadership that he showed then and has shown since. I say thank you also to the registrar and his team in Stockton-on-Tees. Mr. John Sumsion, the original registrar, did a wonderful job. He is the only man I know who led a quango in a successful way, the head of a lean, mean team which delivered the goods.

I say thank you to the Government for sustaining support for what is an excellent scheme. Most of all, I say thank you—*[Interruption.]* I anticipate the question that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) wants to ask. The list of my books is long and, as the Library is still open, he can go and check for himself.

Mr. Snape: While the hon. Gentleman is listing the people he wishes to thank, he may care to head the list with the name of Mr. Michael Foot, who assured the Labour Whips Office in 1979 that the measure that he was about to introduce would be enormously popular. Alas, not only did it not win us the election, but I learn to my sorrow that it put money into the hon. Gentleman's pocket.

Mr. Brandreth: We authors should salute fellow authors, including Mr. Michael Foot, an author and historian of note—and still wearing the same donkey jacket, as befits a distinguished author.

If the reading of books is the mark of a civilised society, we can draw comfort from the latest issue of "Cultural Trends," which suggests that book reading is on the increase and that more books are being borrowed from libraries. Indeed, whereas in 1977, 54 per cent. of the population gave the reading of books as one of their favourite pastimes, the figure is now 62 per cent. Consumer spending on books doubled in the last six years, and people are borrowing more books, by the million. Thanks to the public lending right and the registrar, 563 million loans took place in 1992, the 10th year of the scheme.

Given the doom and gloom that is paraded about our society—about the moral and cultural decline and the vacuum in which we live—it is interesting to note the sort of books that people borrow—*[Interruption.]*—from libraries registered in public lending right. The work of the registrar shows us the authors and books that are borrowed.

Mr. Channon: Who came top of the poll?

Mr. Brandreth: At the top are many favourites, including Virginia Andrews, Agatha Christie, Catherine Cookson, Len Deighton, Dick Francis, Jack Higgins, Victoria Holt, Stephen King, Ed McBain, Ruth Rendell, Wilbur Smith and Danielle Steel, all with loans of over 1 million. Sadly, my noble Friend Lord Archer is not among those with over1 million. He is in the over 500,000 list—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East scoffs. Whenever we in this country come across a successful person, we scoff. We love to take successful people and instead of, as people do in other countries, putting them on a pedestal and saying "Well done," we chip away at the statue. We mock the successful people who bring millions, if not billions, of pounds to this

[Mr. Brandreth]

country. *[Interruption.]* Oh, yes, they are coming to life now, because they are at home when it comes to mocking success.

What is interesting is that the work of the registrar reveals to us not only what contemporary writers are receiving public lending rights, but what classic books are being read by people nowadays.

Sir Roger Moate: Far from attacking successful authors, we are rewarding them with £6,000 each. Is not that munificence? Do they also say thank you to the public for this largesse?

Mr. Brandreth: Indeed we do, although I am not one of the 97 out of 16,000 authors who receive the public lending right. The principle is that we should reward authorship.

The classic authors, those who are most borrowed—up to half a million borrowings a year—are Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Tolkein, Anthony Trollope——

Mr. Snape: Order. They cannot benefit from public lending right.

Mr. Brandreth: This is work produced by the public lending rights office in Stockton-on-Tees and taken from the annual report, and it is part of the funding that goes to the administration which produces this useful information. I did not think that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) was in the Chair.

In the second division, over 100,000, the list ranges from Charlotte Bronte to George Orwell—a socialist, but none the less he is here. This is an open opportunity scheme. Even William Shakespeare is being borrowed.

Mr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): May I remind my hon. Friend that his cocoa is getting cold?

Mr. Brandreth: My hon. Friend is quite right, and my children may well be up.

All that I want to say is that the English literary heritage is the glory of our civilisation. It is quite right that we should recognise the contribution that authors make to our cultural and literary life. We are right to reward the living ones with public lending rights. They play a very important part in our civilised life. Let us acknowledge with gratitude something wholly good that is emanating from the House tonight.

11.31 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): May I briefly disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) in his contention that this money should not be paid? I very much welcome tonight's order, not least because it will keep 16 of my constituents in work for another several years. I believe that, if an author sells a book to a public library which is then lent out, he is forgoing sales and therefore revenue which he would get from sales all over the country. In the light of that, it seems only right that some payment should be made and some record kept of which books are the most borrowed from our libraries.

I thank the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) for their congratulations to my constituents. We have an excellent leader in Dr. Parker, the present registrar for public lending right, as we had under his illustrious predecessor, John Sumsion, whom I knew very well.

I am pleased to see that, on the 10th anniversary, which unfortunately I was unable to attend, but which the Secretary of State did attend, in my constituency, the top-selling author, and thus the top-rewarded author, was a north-eastern one—Catherine Cookson—who I believe has led the polls for several years in the past.

The 16 people in Stockton-on-Tees work extremely hard. They have recently had a wonderful new computer, which should bring down their administration costs quite sharply, I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat). Therefore, he need not have too many worries about the percentage currently being taken in administration costs. It is a hard-working, efficient team, which has been given plaudits by people who know of the work that it does. I wish it every success in the future.

11.33 pm

Mr. Key: It is appropriate that my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) rounded off this important debate. I know what interest he takes in the work of his constituents, who perform a service to all of us who love books, whether we write them, read them, borrow them or buy them. I am grateful to him for his interest and support, as I know his constituents are.

My hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) is always a very hard act to follow. We are all grateful to him for enlivening the debate and giving that right sense of joy which should come from anyone who loves books. Books are about so much more than what is inside them. I recall a former Archbishop of Canterbury who insisted that, before he read a book, he always smelled it to check that it would be all right, so it takes all sorts.

The hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), who opened the debate, addressed serious issues. I will seek to demonstrate that, far from the public lending right being gravely affected, as she argued, it is flourishing and will continue to expand. The profession of librarian is an honourable one. It is also a modern and up-to-date profession which is responding to the changing demands and expectations of those who use libraries.

It is not the case that a library could be regarded as successful, irrespective of what it does, if only it were open six days a week, morning and afternoon, for 60 hours. I have no power to intervene in the day-to-day management of the public library service. Library authorities are best placed to decide on service provision, including opening hours and library closures, taking into account local needs and resources.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to ensure that library authorities in England meet their duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service. He has no powers to interfere in the day-to-day management of the service. The hon. Lady was tempting us to stray down the path of a local government finance debate which I would have been glad to hold, considering the happy time I had in the Department of the Environment, but it would not be appropriate. I must not forget that my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester's cocoa is getting steadily colder.

At this time of year, we would expect competing bids in local authorities. The example most widely quoted has

been Manchester. I am delighted to hear that the libraries and theatres department has been required to make savings which mean that there will be no library closures, and that the department's savings will be less than those for some other departments.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon) is to be congratulated on steering the legislation through some years ago, and on being the first Minister, I think, responsible for the implementation of the principle. When he was responsible, I know that he went to Stockton to ensure that the system was up and running.

My right hon. Friend asked important questions which I shall seek to answer concisely. Of the 30 library authorities—not libraries, incidentally; there will be libraries within the authorities—in the PLR sample, four this year supplied loans data from several branches. That enabled us to increase the sample size from last year's figure of 10·6 million to 16·1 million books. From the 16·1 million loans sampled, our computer estimates individual book issues to equal the total loans from United Kingdom public libraries. To recognise the fact that sampling strength varies between regions, the calculation is done in two stages; first, the computer takes the loans recorded in each region to arrive at a regional estimate, and then adds the regional totals to arrive at the national estimate.

My right hon. Friend asked whether community residents could receive money. The answer is yes. He asked about children's books; there is no qualifying minimum number of pages any more. Among the illustrious titles mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for the City of Chester, who will now be thinking about heating up his cocoa, we find not only Agatha Christie and Ruth Rendell but Enid Blyton, who continues to be in the category of estimated loans of more than 1 million.

On reference books, a sub-committee of the Public Lending Right Advisory Committee is concluding its deliberations. I reassure my right hon. Friend that illustrators qualify, as do editors. Therefore, there has been progress since he was responsible for these matters.

The installation of the computer has led to a reduction in the funding that is available for distribution. The 90 per cent. target is not fanciful. The registrar is keen to establish a figure of 11 per cent. on which he can work for administrative expenses.

The European Commission has submitted a draft directive on rental and lending rights. That was submitted in January 1991 and advocates recognition in each member state of the right of authors to remuneration for the public lending of their books. At present the United Kingdom has a reciprocal public lending arrangement only with Germany. However, there was much opposition to the lending right provisions of the draft directive. As a result, a compromise has been agreed by the member states, allowing countries to continue to give priority to the cultural objectives of their national schemes and to exclude certain types of library institution from PLR calculations. Therefore, the principle of subsidiarity applies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Mr. Sproat) objected to the principle of PLR. I assure him that 16 civil servants means 16: there are no part-time officials. There is one committee, the excellent Public Lending Right Advisory Committee, which has nine members who work extremely hard on behalf of us all. There is a £1 minimum limit and a £6,000 upper limit, and money for those who qualify above that figure is redistributed. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) still finds that a fallacious principle. I shall clearly not convince him otherwise, and I am ever mindful of the cocoa of my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester.

It is important to recompense authors in this way. The sale of one book to a public library ensures that many readers will take advantage of that authorship. I appreciate that those readers might have purchased copies of the book if the library service had not provided it. There are other examples of regular payments for the product of a person's mind. For example, there are many patent payments. The principle of copyright is designed to assist in that area.

The scheme depends on computers, and the computer has been the cause of a considerable increase in this year's administrative expenses. An advisory group includes representatives from the Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency and the Cabinet Office internal audit. A contract was awarded to BIS Information Systems to replace the computer. That was worth £580,000 and accounts for a great deal of the amount to which my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich referred. Staged payments for the contract are being made on the successful completion of each phase. The design was completed in March 1992 and testing began in May last year. The old and new systems have been running in parallel. One of the benefits of the new system will be additional storage capacity.

Public libraries added 11 million books to their stock in 1990-91. Many public libraries have increased book expenditure in real terms over the past decade, and for the first time in a decade, borrowing last year was up. Book issues are increasing, especially in the shire counties——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I looked at the monitor before I took the Chair and I noticed that my predecessor brought the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman to order. The Minister is straying down the same road and I urge him to return to the subject under debate.

Mr. Key: I am a lost sheep in this argument, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am grateful to you for bringing me back to order. I sought to give the hon. Member for Cynon Valley the courtesy of a reply, but perhaps I should speak to her elsewhere to reassure her and allay her fears.

The expectations of the public in this respect have risen and, through our recognition of the public lending right, we have seen that libraries are not just repositories of our uniquely rich heritage but resource centres for our communities, important to the quality of our lives. It is a modest mark of our gratitude to those with gifts and skills of writing that we make this increase to the public lending right and I commend the order to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Public Lending Right (Increase of Limit) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 17th February, be approved.

PETITIONS

Excavation (Thurrock)

11.45 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I am pleased to present to the House a petition by County Councillor Reg Lee, Margie Roberts and other residents of Aveley in my constituency of Thurrock, and other men and women from Essex, who are concerned for the protection and promotion of the environment and who consider that, without the intervention of this place, permission shall be granted to the company Greenways to excavate and fill Aveley No. 3 pit which is situated on the Romford road in Essex with a consequential blight on properties, hazards from increased lorry movement and pollution of the soil and atmosphere—work which they would have to endure for a further 17 years.

Wherefore, your petitioners—

who exceed 3,500—

pray that your honourable House shall seek to persuade the Secretary of State for the Environment to exercise his power to determine this planning application following an independent public inquiry where the views and objections of the petitioners can be heard and examined by an independent Inspector appointed for this purpose, and your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Rail Privatisation

11.46 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I rise to present a petition on behalf of the Railway Development Society, signed by no fewer than 18,753 members of the public, against the privatisation of British Rail. The petitioners believe that, far from solving British Rail's problems, privatisation will add to them, and that the railway industry needs investment, not dismemberment.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House: Will abandon the ill-conceived British Rail privatisation proposals and embark urgently upon a properly funded investment programme. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Castle Fraser, Grampian

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

11.47 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): This debate, which I am pleased to have the opportunity to bring to the House, was triggered by the decision of the Castle Fraser estate in my constituency in January to serve eviction notices on 16 tenants to secure vacant possession for the break-up and sale of the estate.

Before the letters went out to the tenants, they were called together and told that they would be receiving this notice because it had proved impossible to sell the estate as a going concern as they had been told should have been possible.

At the time, they were not told of their rights that, for example, a sheriff court order would be required before they were evicted; nor were they given any idea that there could be flexibility in the notice that they had been given. In some cases, all they were told was they had to be out of their homes and would lose their jobs at four weeks' notice.

As can be imagined, that caused a furore in the area. In Gordon district in the past two years, the number of tenants who have gone on to the housing list because tied accommodation was no longer available was 21 and 39 respectively, so 16 coming in one go from one estate was a high proportion of the total that might be expected in any one year.

I contacted the factor of the estate to try to persuade him to be more flexible, and he told me that he recognised that he would have to go through the sheriff court and that he had not instigated that procedure. Nevertheless, he had not told the tenants that, and they thought that the letters were legal notices that they were bound to obey.

It also turned out that the claim that there had been no bids that could have kept the estate together or continued the employment and tenancy of the tenants was not true; there were bids for substantial parts of the estate which would have maintained some of the employment and some of the tenancies. That outcome is still possible.

On the good side, no sheriff court action has been taken. I understand that negotiations are still in hand to complete the sale, and it is possible that some tenants may be retained. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate that was not made apparent at the time notice was given, because a great deal of heartache and anxiety could have been avoided. When I met the tenants a couple of days after they received that notification, they were shaken, shocked and in many ways disillusioned with their treatment.

One sad aspect is that Castle Fraser was in many ways a model, well run estate. The tenants were well treated and the houses well maintained. In that context, the termination of the tenants' employment and the summary notice that they were required to leave was a bigger shock than otherwise might have been the case.

The case highlights a number of important issues. It shows that the present law relating to tied tenancies in Scotland is unsatisfactory. I make it clear that I do not oppose the principle of tied housing, for I recognise its essential role in rural areas. Tied housing could be the subject of a debate, but I do not want to embark upon one at this stage.

People who work on the land need to live close to their jobs, and tied housing is one means of bringing that about. The question is not whether we should get rid of tied housing—I do not think we should, and I do not want to promote or to support legislation to that effect. What matters is managing the transition in a humane and sensible way that gives the tenant fair treatment and does not impose an untoward burden on already hard-pressed local authorities.

The trustees of the Castle Fraser estate took advantage of the law as it stands and the local authority's good will to deposit a problem on the public sector, to maximise the sale value on the break-up of the estate. They should not have been allowed to do that. I am not suggesting that the trustees did anything wrong or illegal, but that we should look to the law as it stands.

I do not believe that the trustees would have taken that action if they had not taken the view that they could dump the problem on the local authority to resolve. Any local authority would find 16 tenants suddenly deposited on its homeless list a problem. My local authority of Gordon has more problems than most in that respect.

There should be a requirement in law for the landowner to observe a court process to recover his property—not just the sheriff court requirement, but a specific claim to demonstrate a good reason for requiring vacant possession. A good reason would be that he needed the house for land management or agricultural purposes; that he needed it for himself or his family, which would be a reasonable entitlement; or that the tenant had caused problems, broken an agreement, or presented a nuisance.

The action should not become effective until the tenant had been adequately rehoused. That would remove the deep anxiety caused to tenants seeing an eviction date looming and not knowing where they were to live. Such changes would not undermine the owner's fundamental right to recover his property, but would prevent an owner from exploiting the situation simply to secure vacant possession to maximise his return or profit from the property's sale. It would remove from tenants the worry of being turfed out into bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and provide them with the knowledge that they would not be moved until they had been adequately rehoused.

When notice is served, there should also be a requirement to notify the tenant—in writing if possible—of his or her rights. It is astonishing that tenants can be given notice, as they were at Castle Fraser, without any indication that they had the right to await a court order. Tenants should be able to seek advice, perhaps from the local authority officer responsible for the homeless. The local authority and I gave the Castle Fraser tenants the information they required, but two or three days after they were given notice. I regret that the estate's factor gave them no such indication until pressed to do so. I do not believe that any tenant should be faced with that kind of shock, and I do not believe that local authorities should be left to cope with the situation without assistance.

Gordon district is the fastest growing community in Britain—apart from Milton Keynes, which has the benefit of a development corporation to deal with its housing problems. The council has an excellent record of housing management: a very high proportion of houses—approaching 30 per cent., I believe—have been sold. Despite that, or perhaps partly because of it, we have seen increasing homelessness and a lengthening waiting list.

According to the most recent figures, 2,029 people were on the waiting list on 4 March. Between 1 April last year and 28 February this year, 435 homelessness applications were received; by the end of January, 290 had been accepted as priorities. It is estimated that, between the middle of this year and the middle of 1998, 2,433 new houses will be required in Gordon to meet the projected increase in the population.

At present, the council estimates that 1,183 houses are likely to be built, of which precisely three will be local authority houses. Currently, no local authority houses are being built anywhere in Gordon district. I must say that I find that astonishing. Because of keen demand, the price of houses in Gordon is generally high. The real shortfall in the community is of affordable houses to rent and low-price starts: whenever such houses become available, they are snapped up, leaving a waiting list that is still rising.

Let me say in parenthesis to certain people in Gordon district that tearing up the local plan and allowing people planning permission to build in every field in the area does not meet the need of affordable houses to rent.

The council has shown itself to be flexible. It has taken up every initiative presented by the Government and the Housing Corporation, and has given a lead in exploring every possibility of co-operation, joint ownership and different forms of tenure. There is no ideological conflict between Gordon district and the Government; there is simply a plea for resources.

People become very angry about those who are put into bed-and-breakfast accommodation. They are not concerned only about the hardship; the accommodation is often good, although it does not constitute a satisfactory home from which children can set off to school and to which they can return. Gordon district estimates that it will cost it a quarter of a million pounds in the current financial year, and it has already spent £120,000. That is not a sensible use of public money, but the council has been forced into it.

A strategic agreement has just been signed with Scottish Homes, which I understand is likely to bring in more than £20 million and will provide between 400 and 500 homes over the next three to five years. Of course I welcome that; but that number of houses will not contain, let alone reduce, the waiting list. Welcome though they are, the houses are not in proportion to the problem we face in the north-east of Scotland.

I see that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) is in the Chamber. Let me point out that the problem is not confined to Gordon district. I have been in touch with Aberdeen city council, which tells me that the figures peaked in 1987, with 2,000 people on the homeless list; the most recent figure is 1,606. Only 57 council houses are being built throughout the city, against a waiting list of 4,400 and a transfer list of 6,200. The Minister must realise that the problem is very large, and getting larger every year. At present, we are not doing nearly enough to deal with it.

The population expansion in Gordon and in the north-east of Scotland has been consistent for almost 20 years. It is not just a matter of oil and gas people moving into the area. It has changed the profile of the population. It has ensured that we have a younger mix, with a growing number of households in relation to total population. That is increasing the pressure on the housing authorities and established businesses outside the oil and gas sector.

[Mr. Malcolm Bruce]

We are making a great contribution to national resources and national wealth, and I think that we are entitled to be given assistance to deal with our problems. We do not operate on a low-rent basis. Houses are well maintained and well funded, but we cannot provide something with nothing. That is, fundamentally, what I believe the Government have got to take on board.

The Government should now accept that the particular circumstances of the Castle Fraser debacle bring home the need for a radical rethink of housing policy in the north-east of Scotland, especially in rural areas. I believe that the Government should give serious consideration to changing the law, to giving more security to tenants in tied accommodation and to providing proper resources to meet the needs, so as to enable the local authorities to deal with real homelessness problems and the hidden homelessness of people on waiting lists who are unable to buy.

The local authorities are perfectly willing to co-operate with the Government on a variety of different terms of tenure and different ways of solving the problems. There are no ideological problems, but to date I have to say that, despite their expressions of good will, the reality is that the Government have not acknowledged the scale of the problem that arises out of our economic success in the north-east of Scotland. As a consequence, we see genuine, individual hardship for people who are unable to get adequate housing.

We also see a constraint upon the economic development that is so beneficial not just to our own community but to the economy of Scotland and the economy of the United Kingdom. I urge the Minister to take on board the fact that the housing problems of the north-east of Scotland need a fundamental reappraisal.

12.1 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I congratulate the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), who has done a service to his constituents by raising this subject.

I have no objection whatever to Gordon district council going to Scottish Homes regarding the allocation of £20 million to further the strategic agreement that it has entered into with the district council, if it feels that an adjustment is urgently needed to deal with these problems. It therefore follows that it may be possible for the district council to follow up with the Scottish Landowners Federation the £3·3 million that has been allocated for bringing empty houses, some of them in Grampian, back into use.

I shall of course take account of what the hon. Gentleman has said about the needs of a growing population, not only in his constituency but in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), who is here tonight. These matters will be taken into account before the final allocations are made.

May I express my sympathy for those men and women who face the possibility of losing their homes when they are made redundant? Although the Scottish Office has no powers to intervene, I have asked officials to contact Gordon district council to establish the facts and see how it can assist. Also, with the agreement of Countess Iveagh, my officials have spoken to the Castle Fraser factor and solicitor, who has supplied further information on the current position. It may help the hon. Gentleman if I set out briefly what we understand to be the situation.

The Castle Fraser estate is owned by a trust, which for family reasons decided in 1991 to sell the estate. The argument runs as follows. The late Major Smiley had set standards for the estate which required staffing levels substantially above those required for an estate on commercial lines. It was therefore recognised that any new owner might not keep the present staff complement. This would apply whether or not the estate was sold as a whole, or in a number of lots. In fact, the estate was advertised for sale either as a whole, or in eight lots. As the seller concluded that no satisfactory offer was received for the whole estate, it is now being sold in eight lots. Many of these will be sold to farmers, who will require the tied houses for themselves and their families.

There are 13 families and 16 employees affected by the sale—not 16 families as suggested in press reports. I have been informed by the estate that the Iveagh family has been concerned about the future of these employees and that they are receiving substantial redundancy payments. The redundancy notices have included a formal notice that the tenants' right to occupy these houses ceased with their employment. However, the estate has not taken any action to evict the tenants. It has also negotiated with the new owners to obtain agreement to be flexible about the timing of action to take possession of tied houses, to give the tenants additional time to find alternative accommodation.

I understand that there has been some progress. The estate itself has provided accommodation for two families, and Gordon district has rehoused a single man. I believe that four more families have found alternative accommodation. I hope that more families will be able to find other homes and jobs, in some cases through re-employment by the new owners. Here again, the Scotish Office has no direct powers to intervene, but I hope that both old and new owners will be sensitive to the employment needs of those affected, and I trust that special consideration will be given to the possibility of re-employing those workers. I also understand that the estate has given guarantees of accommodation to six recently retired employees.

As for the current legal position, the hon. Member is aware that tied tenancies are part of contracts of employment. As such, they fall outside the scope of the law of landlord and tenant. All employees will have been made aware of the conditions attached to the tied tenancies when they accepted employment, but I appreciate that the changes of ownership are both sudden and difficult for all concerned.

I must emphasise that tied tenants cannot be evicted without a court order. For Castle Fraser tied tenants who are agricultural workers, under section 24 of the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984, the sheriff can suspend a court order for possession in certain circumstances—for example, in response to representations if the actions of the owner are considered to be unreasonable or would cause hardship to the individuals concerned. I consider that there is a strong moral obligation, which should be accepted by the estate owners in such cases, to allow a satisfactory time for the estate employees to relocate themselves and their families. It is a sign of responsible land ownership that, when such

sales take place, there is a sensible period of transition to enable the former estate employees and their families to adjust to the new conditions.

The hon. Member will be aware that English legislation is not identical to that in Scotland. He has referred in the past to the legislation in England on security of tenure in so far as it affects tied tenants who are agricultural workers. Unfortunately, such legislation would not help estate employees, who do not qualify as agricultural workers. Introducing such legislation in Scotland would be complex, and could have implications for other aspects of Scots law, including agricultural law. However, I have decided to ask the Scottish Law Commission to examine the question of tied tenancies and to give me its views in due course. I trust that that will reassure the hon. Member that I am treating his remarks with great concern.

I have seen a copy of the letter to the hon. Member from the Scottish Landowners Federation. I note that discussions involving the Rural Forum and others are under way about the problems caused by tied tenancies. I understand that those are continuing, and it would be premature for me to comment on the proposals at this stage. I would naturally support any action which, while recognising the benefits of tied tenancies, gave proper emphasis to the interests of tenants. But I would make two points.

First, although the SLF claims that the real problem is a lack of alternative housing, as I have already said, we are taking vigorous action to improve the supply of rural housing. Secondly, I note the SLF's concern about the ineffective working of the English Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee, which decides whether repossession of a tied house is justified on grounds of agricultural necessity. That justifies my caution about the introduction of such an approach in Scotland.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Will the Minister give way?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Briefly, as I have a lot of ground to cover.

Mr. Bruce: May I explain that the Scottish Landowners Federation says that the reason why the advisory committee is not working is the shortage of suitable accommodation in the relevant areas—so the two aspects are linked.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are working hard to ensure that there is more accommodation, and Scottish Homes' rural housing strategy is geared to achieving that end, by housing associations providing affordable homes for rent, and grants for rent and ownership—GRO—funding, to provide low-cost home ownership or housing for rent.

Rural home ownership grants are also available to individuals in remote areas to enable them to build their own homes. The target for 1992-93 is to provide 1,000 new or improved units in rural areas. More than 80 per cent. of that target has already been achieved, and 100 per cent. is forecast by 31 March. That will be a remarkable achievement. But even more importantly, Scottish Homes plans to provide 1,600 homes for rent or sale in rural areas in 1993-94, an increase of 60 per cent. over this year's target. That includes 100 grants for local people to build their own homes.

Considerable resources are of course needed to support such ambitious plans. We have increased Scottish Homes' overall programme to £327 million for 1993-94, an increase of 9 per cent. on the original plans for this year. Rural areas are set to benefit to an even greater extent from the additional resources. The programme for 1992-93 includes around £47 million for expenditure in rural areas. The programme for 1993-94 will include more than £55 million for expenditure in rural areas—an increase of almost 22 per cent., which is a substantial step forward.

As well as providing large numbers of affordable homes, Scottish Homes is also promoting innovative responses to the special needs of rural areas. The 10 rural demonstration areas, set up as part of its rural housing strategy, cover a wide range of areas and initiatives.

Scottish Homes is also working with other key agencies in rural areas, in particular with local authorities. Scottish Homes has now signed strategic investment agreements with more than 30 local authorities, many of which cover rural areas. I was very pleased to hear that Scottish Homes and Gordon district council recently signed the agreement which allows for a five-year investment of around £20 million. This will provide around 450 new or improved units of mixed house type, as the hon. Member mentioned.

One project of note which may assist in that connection is the £1·7 million housing development for first-time buyers at Pitmedden, through a partnership between Scottish Homes, Stewart Milne Construction and Gordon district council. The 42 homes will primarily be targeted at Gordon district council's tenants and people on the council's waiting list, with particular attention to those on low incomes. The first houses are scheduled for completion this summer, which might be a relevant timetable in the context of this debate. Such schemes have a double benefit; they provide not only homes for those on low incomes, which is important for the economic prosperity of the area, but also free district council accommodation, which in turn helps it to tackle homelessness.

While on the subject of local authorities, I should also note that rural authorities receive a greater share of the housing revenue account resources available, compared with the scale of their housing stock. In 1993-94, rural authorities with just over 23 per cent. of the council housing stock will receive 25·2 per cent.—more than £97 million out of the provisional HRA allocations. Rural authorities with just 29 per cent. of the Scottish population will receive 34·4 per cent., nearly £37 million of the national non-HRA allocations available for assistance to the private housing sector for 1993-94. Rural local authorities also have a relative advantage in the distribution of housing support grant.

I might add that, through Scottish Homes, we have worked for example with the Scottish Landowners Federation in Grampian, Tayside and Fife to help bring empty properties in rural areas back into use. Scottish Homes is also working with the Forestry Commission and the Ministry of Defence on similar initiatives.

Those initiatives are some of the many carried out using an additional allocation of £3·3 million, which I earmarked specifically just before the election, in this financial year, to bring empty properties back into use. They also include projects to bring empty upper-floor town centre property back into use. In total, those projects will bring into, or retain for, use almost 200 properties. That is a matter that the district council might like to follow up with the Scottish Landowners Federation, in case there might be relevant possibilities in that area.

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

On the question of homelessness, tied tenants have exactly the same rights to local authority help under the homelessness legislation as anyone else. The kind of help that housing authority had a duty to provide would depend on individual circumstances, but, at a minimum, would include advice and assistance in finding alternative accommodation. This need not be in a council house. For example, an authority may have nomination rights to housing association tenancies. Indeed, there are a number in Lang Stane, and Castlehill. I do not know whether there are any vacant houses, but nomination rights do exist. As I have said, the district council is free to discuss these matters in depth with Scottish Homes.

Alternatively, the accommodation could be permanent, although, if this is not immediately available, the authority should ensure that temporary accommodation is available over the interim period. I understand that the local housing authority—Gordon district council—is keeping itself informed of developments on the Castle Fraser estate. It is to be commended for doing so.

I announced recently that Gordon district would receive an extra allocation of £240,000 in 1992-93 for tackling homelessness. This will enable the authority to reduce the use of bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Gordon district has also been given a substantial provisional allocation of more than £7·025 million for 1993-94, which can be used to aid the homeless if this is a local priority. It is possible that some of those affected by the changes will benefit from this increasing scale of investment in rural areas by Scottish Homes.

If the shortfall in supply can be overcome, the necessity for employees to accept tied housing at the start of an employment contract can be reduced over time. There may, however, continue to be a supply problem in some remote areas, where estate management requires the worker or workers to be close at hand. In those special cases, where there has been a satisfactory working relationship over many years, it is extremely important that the good will of estate workers and their families be actively conserved by the owners of the estates themselves. That is very much in their own interests if the viability of these estates is to be maintained in practice.

Again I thank the hon. Member for Gordon for rendering a service to his constituents. I hope that I have been able to indicate some of the possible ways forward. If the problem is not solved, the hon. Gentleman may come and have a discussion with me, and we shall see what can be done at that stage. In any case, I hope that these matters will be resolved before long.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes past Twelve o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 10 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Human Rights

1. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he proposes to take to promote the international protection of human rights.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): We take every opportunity to promote respect for human rights, through our bilateral relations and in international bodies. With our European Community partners, we shall play a leading role at the world conference on human rights due to take place in Vienna in June this year.

Dr. Wright: Do the Government and the Foreign Secretary accept that any new world order worthy of its name is not one that permits Governments to continue persecuting and terrorising their populations? Will the Government and the Foreign Secretary follow the lead taken by the French and German Foreign Ministers and by the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe and start arguing for an international tribunal under the United Nations at which systematic violations of human rights can be brought to book? Is not that the kind of new world order that the world deserves?

Mr. Hogg: We have been playing a leading part in all the effective initiatives that are intended and are likely to produce an enhancement of human rights in every country where there is a human rights problem. I am not sure that the particular solution identified by the hon. Gentleman is likely to be profitable, if only because before there can be an effective trial there must be a defendant.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that many of us welcome the fact that the international community is taking a much more robust view of article 41 of the United Nations charter, which allows intervention in the affairs of a sovereign state? Will my right hon. and learned Friend seek through the international community further urgent intervention in the appalling situation that is developing in the Sudan, where the Nuban people in particular are being systematically persecuted in a way that is likely to put their survival at risk?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend makes a serious point. We are deeply worried by reports of possible atrocities in the Juba area and in the Nuba hills. As my hon. Friend probably knows, a relevant resolution is going through even today at the European Commission of Human Rights in Geneva. We have taken every step that we can, bilaterally and collectively, to impose further pressure on the Sudan. I raised that precise matter recently with the incoming Sudanese ambassador, whom I saw but a few days ago.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister take this opportunity to acknowledge, particularly in a week which includes Commonwealth Day, when the focus was on human rights, the special role and importance of the Commonwealth in human rights initiatives? Bearing in mind—I doubt whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman will agree with me on this—the undoubted damage that was done to the Commonwealth during the Thatcher years due to weakness in respect of human rights in South Africa, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ensure that at next autumn's Heads of Government conference, social and political rights will be high on the agenda and actively supported by the British Government?

Mr. Hogg: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's remarks about my right hon. and noble Friend the former Prime Minister, but I accept that the Commonwealth has a role to play. However, it is important to have as broad a base for collective action as can be achieved. The United Nations and the European Commission of Human Rights are therefore even more effective, because those institutions are more broadly based than the Commonwealth.

Nagorno Karabakh

2. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current situation in Nagorno Karabakh.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There has been a further recent escalation in the fighting in Nagorno Karabakh following an offensive by the Armenian forces there. We are concerned by reports of hundreds of further casualties in recent weeks. We urge the parties to the dispute to heed the call by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe for a ceasefire and to negotiate constructively in the talks being held under CSCE auspices.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those negotiations are unlikely to succeed without a ceasefire? Will he commend to both sides in the Nagorno Karabakh dispute the Atkinson peace plan, which was put to both sides in Strasbourg last September, as a realistic way forward—not least to avoid the genocide and ethnic cleansing which would undoubtedly occur in the area if the promised Azeri spring offensive were allowed to take place in the next few weeks?

Mr. Hogg: Before I commend the Atkinson peace plan to the House, I congratulate my hon. Friend on our involvement and that of our noble Friend Lady Cox in the question of Nagorno Karabakh.

I substantially agree with the peace plan. It stresses the need for a ceasefire; it stresses that there can be no change in frontiers; it makes the important point that the future of Nagorno Karabakh lies in its existence as an autonomous

region within Azerbaijan; and it emphasises the importance of a number of confidence-building measures, with all of which I agree.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I join the Minister in congratulating the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) on his activities in this regard. Does the Minister agree, however, that the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe could do more and that the Muslim community in our own nation should help Muslim communities elsewhere to show the same tolerance that Christians show them here?

Mr. Hogg: I certainly think that the CSCE is the leading international organisation in terms of promoting a ceasefire and subsequent negotiations. It may, indeed, be the leading organisation if and when a peacekeeping force becomes necessary. I do not think that it makes sense for any of the parties to think that they would do well to transfer the negotiations to the United Nations; let us keep them within the CSCE.

On the hon. Gentleman's latter point, the answer may be yes; it would be necessary to explore particular methods, but it is worth thinking about.

Hong Kong

3. **Mr. Sims:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet the Governor of Hong Kong to discuss his plans for democratic reform.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I plan to meet the Governor during his visit to this country in April and to discuss with him the progress of his proposals for democracy in Hong Kong, which have our full support.

Mr. Sims: Can my right hon. Friend assure the House and the people of Hong Kong that he and the Governor are of one mind about how to implement the proposals for democratic reform in the territory? Can he reassure us that Hong Kong will be fully involved in any discussions that may take place between the British and Chinese Governments?

Mr. Hurd: Yes. As I have said, the Governor has our firm and daily support. He and the Executive Council are fully involved in making policy on this and other issues. We hope that it may soon be possible for us to do what the Governor has always wanted and start discussions with the Chinese on the constitutional position. If such discussions were to start, the British team would of course include representatives of the Hong Kong Government.

Sir David Steel: In view of the Governor's previous high-profile partisan role in politics in this country, is it not important to make it clear that his proposals enjoy not only the support of Her Majesty's Government but support across the Floor of the House? Many of us regard them as the minimum necessary to give reality to the pledge of one country, two systems.

Mr. Hurd: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman and I agree with him. It is also relevant that the Governor's proposals continue to enjoy wide support in Hong Kong.

Mr. David Howell: Does my right hon. Friend accept that, as evidenced by the last question, the Governor of Hong Kong has the full support of the House in his difficult handling of the reform process with Beijing? Does he accept that although we respect the aims of the People's Republic of China in trying to develop a market economy, want its friendship and wish to pay it every courtesy, that is not by any means the same as agreeing with its every whim in every case?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with my right hon. Friend. We welcome and support the liberalising measures that the Government of the People's Republic are taking inside China. We want to hold to the joint declaration. We have no intention of going against the Basic Law. We believe that the Governor's proposals fall within the Basic Law. We wish to proceed in consultation and in discussion with China on this and other matters, but the points that my right hon. Friend and the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick, and Lauderdale (Sir D. Steel) have made are valid and it is useful that they have been echoed in all parts of the House.

Dr. John Cunningham: Does the Foreign Secretary understand that we have always supported the Governor's proposals to widen the franchise and to increase democratic involvement in Hong Kong and that that remains our position? When the right hon. Gentleman says that we have to be clear about that, do we not also have a duty to make clear to the people of Hong Kong themselves, including those who sit on Legco, the exact nature of the delay that has been announced? Would it not be clearly unfair to the people of Hong Kong if that delay were to endure without some indication from the Government of the People's Republic of China as to whether, and on what terms, they are willing to return to the discussions about the future of Hong Kong?

Mr. Hurd: The Governor and Exco have delayed publication of the draft legislation in order to create the possibility and the best possible climate for the talks that we hope to achieve, but it has been made clear to all concerned that the delay cannot reasonably continue indefinitely.

South America

4. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last visited the Falkland Islands to discuss relations with South American countries.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): I visited the Falkland Islands from 11 to 13 February. I assured the islanders of Her Majesty's Government's determination to defend their rights to live under a Government of their own choosing. I suggested that the possible advantages of closer links with the Oriental Republic of Uruguay and Chile might merit examination.

Mr. Bates: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree with me, however, that the prosperity of the Falkland islanders depends on their being allowed fully to exploit the considerable natural resources that exist in that part of the world in terms of oil and gas reserves and fish stocks? Should they not also be allowed to develop, reaffirm and restore their sensible trading links with Argentina? Will my right hon. Friend reaffirm the

Government's commitment to British sovereignty of the Falkland Islands, on which the freedoms and aspirations of its people so heavily depend?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. In the course of his visit to Argentina, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary reasserted in firm and robust terms our position on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. It is important for the Falklands to continue to cultivate their long-standing links with Chile and Uruguay. Links with Argentina are a matter for the Falkland islanders themselves; we should not seek to exert any pressure whatever on them in that regard.

Mr. William Ross: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that the Falkland islanders provided the Foreign Office with a draft letter of comfort as long ago as June last year, but that it took the Foreign Office until December to say that the letter was not acceptable and that the Foreign Office has not yet produced its own letter? Is it not now well past the time for that letter of comfort to be issued to the oil exploration companies? When does the Minister intend to make a statement about the next round of block explorations so that people will know exactly where they are going? If such a letter is not issued, the only people who will be prepared to buy the seismic investigation report will be the Argentines? None of us wants that. We want an international input.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman's point is well made. He is aware that we have supported the prospect of seismic exploration in Falkland Islands waters. That is now going ahead. I know that there is anxiety in the Falklands about the letter of comfort. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that it is under active consideration and that we hope to make a decision very soon.

Mr. Temple-Morris: Following my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's successful visit to Argentina, it emerged that the President of Argentina would welcome an invitation to pay an official visit to this country to discuss the Falkland Islands as well as the economic and political issues between our two countries. What is the Government's current position on such a visit?

Mr. Garel-Jones: During my right hon. Friend's visit to Argentina, no Argentine representations were made on that matter. As for a visit by President Menem, we have nothing definite in mind. If such a visit were to take place, it would be important for it to be carefully prepared and timed, but there would be no question of discussing, as my hon. Friend put it, the future of the Falkland Islands: their future is secure and the basis on which our excellent bilateral relations with Argentina are predicated is that sovereignty is not a matter which we are prepared to

Mr. Rogers: Will the Minister be a little more precise in announcing a date for the next licensing round for oil exploration? I understand that the seismic investigation company currently operating there is doing so on a daily basis but that other exploratory companies are holding off because of the uncertainty. When the Minister finalises the licensing round, will he take into account the fact that there are other sovereign states in the area that might want to explore the sedimentary basin and which have legitimate interests in the area?

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman's latter point is, of course, absolutely right. I perfectly understand the anxiety that he and the hon. Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) expressed, but I cannot go further than I already have, which is to say that the matter is under active consideration and we expect to make an announcement very soon.

Japan

5. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to visit Japan to discuss the role of his posts in furthering trade.

Mr. Hurd: I plan to visit Japan in early April. During the visit I shall talk to our ambassador about the considerable effort that our posts in Tokyo and Osaka are giving to export promotion, trade policy and other commercial work, including the encouragement of Japanese investment in this country. I shall also discuss our trading relationship with Japanese and British business men.

Mr. Viggers: May I say how warmly the visit of the Foreign Secretary and, later this year, that of the Prime Minister, will be welcomed in Japan, as they back up the efforts of our excellent ambassador and his staff in Tokyo? Does my right hon. Friend agree that relations between the United Kingdom and Japan are excellent, as exemplified by the fact that more than 40 per cent. of all Japanese investment in Europe is in the United Kingdom? Does he also agree that that investment is being made here because we are in the centre of Europe?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, our relationship is good. It needs to be maintained at all times by visits at all levels, including, and perhaps most important, business visits. My hon. Friend is right—there are now 184 Japanese-owned manufacturing companies in the United Kingdom which have created, or will create, more than 50,000 direct jobs. Those companies come here because they know that we are fully committed members of the European Community and fully committed partners in the single market, not half-in, half-out.

Mr. Enright: Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that since our withdrawal from the exchange rate mechanism the rate at which the Japanese have invested in this country has slowed down considerably?

Mr. Hurd: I think that overseas Japanese investment as a whole has slowed down. I do not have the latest figures, but I am sure that anything that creates uncertainty about our future position in Europe is likely to discourage investors from outside, whether from Japan, the United States or anywhere else.

Yugoslavia

6. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the extension of UNPROFOR's mandate in former Yugoslavia under United Nations Security Council resolution 807.

Mr. Hurd: We support the extension until 31 March of the mandate of UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslavia under Security Council resolution 807. We look forward to

the forthcoming report by the United Nations Secretary-General on further extending and strengthening the mandate.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if, under the renewed mandate, the United Nations or any member state decides to send further troops to former Yugoslavia, they should be deployed in Croatia to implement the Vance plan rather than being sent to Bosnia, where they could get bogged down in a difficult military situation from which it might be extremely difficult to extricate them? If they were sent to Croatia, they would reinforce the credibility of the United Nations and compel the Serbs to give up territory unlawfully seized from Croatia. That would greatly improve the chances of reaching a peaceful solution in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It cannot be done the other way around.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is right. There are two processes in hand—one in Croatia, to which his question and my answer referred, and the other in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They have to go forward in parallel. The credibility of the United Nations in Croatia certainly needs to be restored, which is why the existing mandate is being prolonged only until the end of the month, so that the talks that I mentioned—not simply on renewing the mandate and the United Nations effort in Croatia in support of the Vance plan, but on strengthening them and making them more robust—may be pursued. At the same time, David Owen and Cyrus Vance are energetically trying to find an agreed settlement. They have made some progress in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but they are not there yet.

Mr. Mullin: Is it not a regrettable fact that the only thing that will stop the Serbs—*[Interruption.]*—and the Croats—misbehaving in Bosnia is the fear of military force? I do not seek to pretend that there are simple solutions to the problem—everyone knows that there are not—but in what circumstances would the British Government support military intervention by the United Nations?

Mr. Hurd: If, as the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question suggests, he is talking about military intervention to impose a settlement or solution that has not been agreed, the answer is: in no circumstances. I can think of no Government who propose that and no circumstances in which we would support it. But if the hon. Gentleman is talking about peacekeeping—implementing and helping to make durable a solution that has been agreed—that is a different matter. I do not believe that trying to enforce a particular solution by military means, without agreement, is on.

Mr. Cormack: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the credibility of the United Nations in Bosnia is considerably damaged by the spectacle of troops, including British troops, standing by while men and women are killed and ethnic cleansing is carried on in front of them?

Mr. Hurd: I am sure that my hon. Friend is not underestimating what our troops and civilian drivers are doing. Our troops have escorted 300 convoys carrying 21,000 tonnes of supplies of food and medicines. That is just about the only good news to have come out of Bosnia this year, and we are glad to be able to continue it. We wish to continue it as long as the need is there. I do not believe that that humanitarian effort could be continued—and it could not succeed—if the mandate were changed to force our troops to take sides in the conflict. It is because, with great skill, they have fulfilled their existing mandate that it has been successful and many people of all three communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina who would otherwise have died are alive. We now need to aim at an agreement. David Owen and Cyrus Vance have made progress. The agreement would lead to a ceasfire, and then the question of implementing the ceasefire would have to be tackled.

Mr. Wareing: Was not the ceasefire in Krajina breached on 22 January by the aggresive action of the Croatians? If a ceasefire is to hold and a more permanent peace be brought about, is not one of the vital needs in the area that the Serb minority should feel that they are protected? Would it not therefore be right to press for UNPROFOR's presence to continue at least until the peace negotiations are completed, and to give full support? I welcome what the Foreign Secretary said about intensifying and strengthening the UNPROFOR presence. It is undoubtedly needed in that area.

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman has shifted us back to Croatia. UNPROFOR is needed on a more vigorous basis than before. It also needs to be accompanied by progress, as my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) said, in carrying out the Vance plan. Not only the Government of Croatia but the Serbs living in Croatia have responsibility for making that possible.

European Community (Membership)

7. **Mr. Hague:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made towards enlarging the membership of the European Community.

Mr. Garel-Jones: On 1 February, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs attended the opening of accession negotiations with Austria, Finland and Sweden. Negotiations should start with Norway on 5 April. We shall work with our EC partners for a swift and successful conclusion to these negotiations.

Mr. Hague: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Community can only benefit from the addition of further countries with long democratic traditions and relatively high standards of living? If the Maastricht treaty is such a bad thing, is it not amazing that so many countries wish to join the Community? Does my right hon. Friend also agree that the Community should be looking not only to enlarge its membership, but in the long term to enlarge the number of countries, especially in eastern Europe, with which it has free and fair trading relationships?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend. The accession of the countries I have just mentioned will help to promote a Community that is open, diverse, outward looking and not closed in on itself. Conservatives have always felt that an enlarged Community would be more dynamic and would speak with even greater authority on the world stage.

Our friends in eastern Europe want trade above all. It is extremely important in the coming months that the United Kingdom and other member states, even in these

difficult and recessionary times, should continue to fly the free trade flag inside the Community and in Community relations with the rest of the world.

Mr. O'Hara: Will the Minister give a statement of unequivocal support for the entry of Cyprus into the European Community? Will he confirm that the resolution of the Cyprus problem will not be made a prior condition?

Mr. Garel-Jones: As the hon. Gentleman will be aware, Cyprus applied for membership of the European Community in 1991. The Commission is preparing opinions on that application. The European Council has already decided to strengthen relations with Cyprus by building on the existing association agreements. It would not be right for me to anticipate the Commission's opinion. We shall have to wait and see what the Commission's opinion is.

Sir Michael Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the meeting of the Nordic Council the week before last clearly demonstrated that parliamentarians from Scandinavian countries, those attending from the Baltic Council and those representing the Commonwealth of Independent States, led by Russia, are coming together as an important group to which membership of the Community is now a vital link? Does he agree, therefore, that we should facilitate the process and that it would be greatly expedited if we put the Maastricht treaty behind us?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend. It has been our position throughout our membership of the Community that it must be open to democratic states that can fulfil the conditions of membership. That has been the British position for some time and that is why we were especially pleased that at the Edinburgh Council, for the first time, the goal of European Community membership for the new democracies in eastern Europe was agreed at European Council level. It goes without saying that the applicants from the European Free Trade Association with which we are now negotiating would regard it as not only a disaster for the European Community but as a disaster for themselves if the Maastricht treaty were not speedily ratified.

Mr. Cryer: Has the Minister ensured that the EC's position on the common agricultural policy, for example, is made clear to new entrants? Has he made it clear that approximately 70 per cent. of all EC expenditure goes on that wasteful means of food production which has produced nightmarish levels of pollution through the pouring of pesticides and insecticides on the land, which has in turn polluted our water courses? Has he made it clear that the CAP costs every family in this country roughly £18 extra each week in the family food budget? My guess is that the propaganda from the Common Market tends to paint a very different picture from the bleak reality of that disintegrating organisation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The hon. Gentleman can assume, as indeed can the House, that the applicant EFTA countries are not only highly developed democracies but very sophisticated countries. They have made their own calculation about the benefit of Community membership and specifically of the common agricultural policy. It is faintly patronising of the hon. Gentleman to give advice to four such countries.

European Community (National Parliaments)

9. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the Secretary fo State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list of the areas of policy which remain within the exclusive competence of national parliaments in the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Community exercises only such powers as are delegated to it by the member states. Any powers not so delegated remain with the member states. It is not possible to draw up an exhaustive list.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Is not it an outrage that the Minister has not even tried to answer the question? Does he accept that if we go for the Maastricht treaty, almost every single remaining area of exclusive competence will disappear apart from, in my calculation, grammar schools, the council tax and the level of income tax in so far as it is part of an overall level of taxation approved by central Community institutions? Does not the Minister think that he has a duty to tell people the facts before they vote?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not agree with my hon. Friend's calculation. Indeed, I believe the opposite to be the case. I think that in a number of areas where we have found deficiencies in the Single European Act the Maastricht treaty moves to restrain those deficiencies and to take the Community in the direction in which we wish to see it going. I will not detain the House with a whole list of examples. Let me give just one. In health, while we have recognised the need to co-ordinate research and public information on health protection concerning things like AIDS, the Maastricht treaty provides specifically for the Community not to involve itself in health care because there is no reason why it should do so. The Maastricht treaty specifically constrains Community action in that area, whereas, under the existing treaty, we were under some danger of what my hon. Friend would call creeping competence. There are many such examples littered across the treaty.

Mr. Skinner: Does not the Minister understand that while he and Ministers like him on the Front Bench, as well as other members of the chattering classes and other politicians, talk about the glories of Maastricht and the Common Market in particular, 70 per cent. of the masses outside do not want the Maastricht treaty, because they can see what is happening on the ground floor, with neo-fascist parties being set up in Germany, Italy and France, and with a former SS leader getting massive support in the German elections at the weekend? Together with mass unemployment, that is the truth about the Common Market of today. The halcyon days are over.

Mr. Garel-Jones: So far as the House is concerned at any rate, the hon. Gentleman certainly belongs to the chattering classes. The only time recently that I saw a substantial, albeit paltry, turnout of the National Front in this country—I am sure that my hon. Friends who were there were as shocked as I was—was at the so-called referendum rally in Trafalgar square. I gather that that was well attended, not least by such people.

Mr. Churchill: Given the strong attachment of the EFTA nations to their national sovereignty, is not it clear that once the enlargement of the Community becomes a reality, the dreams of those who would create federal palaces in the air will slam against the buffers of reality?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. The accession of EFTA countries will do two things. First, it will produce a number of countries that are net contributors to the budget and therefore likely to take the realistic attitude that this Government take. Secondly, my hon. Friend is right; it will reinforce the position of those of us who believe that we are building in the European Community not a unitary structure and a unitary state but a union of co-operation between member states.

Equally, I do not think that we should be naive. These countries are independent foreign states. They will fight for their own interests. Of course, we do not expect their interests to coincide with ours in every particular, but, on the fundamentals that my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) mentions, he is absolutely right.

Mr. George Robertson: While we are talking about the rights of national parliaments, what about the right of this House to make a decision about the Government's opt-out from the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty? Does the Minister not recognise that the stinging humiliation suffered by the Government on Monday this week should tell Ministers at least one thing—that if they attempt to use legal trickery or sleight of hand to ignore or override the carrying of amendment No. 27 on the social protocol, it will be seen at home and abroad as a betrayal of this House, this Parliament and parliamentary democracy

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's Government intend to ratify the treaty that we agreed with our 11 partners in the European Community. If the hon. Gentleman had wished to have the treaty altered, the Labour party should have won the election. The Labour party did not win the election and this Government's mandate to ratify the treaty that we agreed with our partners is supported by not only a vote in the House but an overwhelming vote in favour of the Conservative party at the last general election.

Mr. Ian Taylor: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the applicant parliaments in the European Free Trade Association which wish to join the Community know only too well that they already have for their people the economic benefits of the Community through the European economic area? Their precise reason for applying to join the Community is that they want to be part of and influence its political structure, just as we left the European Free Trade Association in 1973 to join the political structure of the European Community.

Is it not therefore absolutely vital that the United Kingdom ratifies the Maastricht treaty, which is the basis on which the other countries are applying, and then plays a leading part in influencing the intergovernmental conference in 1996?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is right. The European economic area gives EFTA countries the benefits of the single market. Those countries, like us, see in the Community an ability to enhance their influence as sovereign states. That is why they are as anxious as we are for the Maastricht treaty to be ratified as soon as possible and for their negotiations to proceed so that they may become full members of the Community.

Israel

10. Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Israel regarding the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs most recently saw the Israeli Foreign Minister in Brussels on 1 February. I have recently seen the Israeli Ministers of Housing and Justice, and I shall be seeing the deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Beilin, tomorrow. There is no doubt that the Israeli Government wish to resume peace negotiations as soon as possible. We have reminded them that this resumption will be facilitated by further Israeli moves to resolve the problem of the Palestinian deportees and concrete measures to improve the human rights situation in the occupied territories.

Mr. Spellar: Will the Minister be discussing with Israeli Ministers the opening of talks with the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the meeting that he had with them yesterday? At the meeting yesterday, did he clearly demand that the Palestine Liberation Organisation seeks to end the violence and terror in the occupied territories?

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I will indeed be talking with Mr. Beilin about the sorts of reasons that caused us to see Mr. Husseini, the Palestine Liberation Organisation representative, yesterday. At yesterday's meeting, I talked about the need for the Israeli Government to take confidence-building measures within the occupied territories to reduce the weight of the occupation. I made it plain to Mr. Husseini and the PLO representative that it would be much easier for the Israeli Government to take that action if violence in the occupied territories could be stopped.

Mr. Samuberg: Contact with the PLO was suspended two years ago because, at that time, when the lives of British troops were at risk, the first people to rush to Baghdad to support Saddam Hussein were PLO representatives and Yasser Arafat. Has my right hon. and learned Friend any evidence to put before the House that the PLO's attitude has changed or, given a repetition of the Gulf conflict, would the PLO behave in exactly the same way?

Mr. Hogg: I think that we can agree that a resumption of the bilateral talks is a matter of enormous importance for the peace of the middle east and, thus, the world. Her Majesty's Government felt that it was important to communicate that view as swiftly and powerfully as possible to the Palestinians and the PLO. That is why we had the meeting yesterday.

Mr. Ernie Ross: I welcome the resumed ministerial contacts between the Government and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. Does the Minister agree that, in order to promote the peace process in a firm and confident move, it would be as well for the Israeli Government—as signatories to the fourth Geneva convention—to accept the Palestinian recommendation to end deportations and all other contraventions of that convention?

Mr. Hogg: I have made the point to the Israeli Ministers, whom I have met on a number of occasions, that the fourth Geneva protocol applies to the occupied territories and that the policies of the Israeli Government

constitute a breach of that fourth protocol in a number of important respects. I have also said that the weight of the occupation, and some of the specific policies employed there, stand in the way of a successful outcome for the peace talks—at the same time, so does the violence being practised by the Palestinians.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: I commend the Government for at last recognising the PLO at ministerial level again following the decision in the Knesset to allow citizens of that country to talk to PLO representatives. Will my right hon. and learned Friend continue to do all that he can to support traditional, secular Palestinian political action as a way of checking Islamic fundamentalism in that part of the world?

Mr. Hogg: The answer to my hon. Friend's specific question is: yes, I will. The thought lying behind my hon. Friend's question is important—if the present Palestinian leadership, represented by Mr. Husseini, is unable to make obvious progress, it is likely to be supplanted by a fundamentalist party. Therefore, I say to the Israelis when I meet them, and through you, Madam Speaker, that it is important that they make rapid progress on reaching an agreement and lifting the weight of the occupation in the occupied territories.

Dr. John Cunningham: Is it not sad but predictable that Dr. Hannah Ashrawi announced in Jerusalem today that the Palestinians will not be returning to the peace talks in April? Is not one of the principal causes for that decision the regrettable illegal expulsion and deportation of the 400 or so Palestinians by the Israeli Labour Government? When the Minister meets Foreign Minister Beilin—as I shall—will he make it clear that a rapid solution to that problem will facilitate a return of the legitimate voice of the Palestinians to the peace negotiations? Will he also join me in making it clear to Mr. Husseini—as I shall when I meet him shortly—that the appalling descent into sectarian violence in Israel is deplored by all friends of Israel, as well as supporters of the legitimate claims of the Palestinians, who want to see peace in the middle east?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his comments and am glad that he, too, is to see Mr. Husseini and the London representative of the PLO. The right hon. Gentleman was right to say that the deportation stands as an obstacle to further discussions. I hope that the Israeli Government will build on what they have already done to comply with resolution 799. I would also go further and say that I think that it is desirable—indeed, essential—that the Israeli Government make it plain that they do not intend to resort to the policy of deportation but will look urgently at other ways of lifting the weight of the occupation.

Middle East

11. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent discussions with the new United States Administration on the middle east peace process.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the peace process with the United States Secretary of State when he saw him in Brussels on 26 February following Mr. Christopher's visit to the middle east. It is clear that the new United States Administration are engaged very seriously in the peace process. They have our full support. We are urging all sides to resume the negotiations as soon as possible.

Mr. Dykes: Does the Minister share my impression from a recent visit that millions of ordinary, decent Israelis and Palestinians are sick to death of the endless saga of violence and killing? They are no longer interested in jogging backwards 30 or 40 years to see who was originally right or wrong. If partition was right in 1948 and was supported by the whole international community, does not that same community, together with Israelis and Palestinians, now have a duty to work to restore that position between the parties? In further contacts with the Americans, may we please make sure that at long last the American Administration take a decisive lead in that context?

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is right. There is a recognition in the state of Israel that the policies pursued in the past, especially the policy of settlement, are not in the interests of the people of Israel. I think that there is also a recognition by the Palestinians that the time has come to reach agreement with the state of Israel. One can detect similar thinking in the adjoining Arab states. That is why it is so important for the parties to go into the bilateral talks again as soon as possible.

Mr. Galloway: While I welcome the Government's decision yesterday to resume ministerial contacts, may I ask the Minister to make it clear to the United States that a similar sign from the United States Administration to the secular, moderate Palestinian leadership would be even more valuable in getting the talks back on the road? I, too, was recently in the area. The position of Hannah Ashrawi, Faisal Husseini and even Arafat is being consistently undermined by the failure of the Israel Government to implement resolution 799, to allow themselves to be forced to do so, or to desist, while talking about violence, from the reign of terror that has been waged in the occupied territories since early December. Tens of children have been shot dead during that time. President Clinton could do a great deal to bring the peace negotiations forward if he sent the same kind of message as that sent by the British Government yesterday.

Mr. Hogg: The United States is doing a great deal to bring the peace process forward. As the hon. Gentleman knows, Secretary of State Christopher recently visited the region and took a letter from President Clinton making it plain to everybody that the President and the United States collectively intend to be a full partner—I use the phrase that was employed—in the peace process. I know that that statement was a great encouragement to Mr. Husseini and others.

European Community (Membership)

12. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further action he intends to take to facilitate the entry of Malta to the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We agreed at last year's Lisbon European Council, and confirmed at Edinburgh, that the Community should develop and strengthen relations with Malta by building on the association agreement and membership application and by developing political

dialogue. When the Commission issues its opinion on Malta's application, the Council of Ministers will consider how to proceed.

Mr. Pawsey: Does my right hon. Friend accept that Malta is an independent, sovereign and prosperous state, and that it is as European as Greece, as democratic as France and is of similar size to Luxembourg? The state of Malta has traditionally looked to Europe. In view of that and the long and strong bonds of friendship between the United Kingdom and Malta, what additional action will my right hon. Friend take to facilitate the early entry of Malta to the Community?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend says about our traditional links and friendship with Malta. Those links were underlined by a visit by Her Majesty the Queen last year. I also agree with what my hon. Friend says about Malta's suitability as a European sovereign state for accession to the Community. We must wait for the Commission's report on the membership application. That will identify the issues arising from the application and they will include, no doubt, the institutional aspects of accession by small states. When we have received that opinion we can consider how best to proceed. I think that Malta could help itself if it were able to meet more fully the obligations under the present association agreement, particularly by moving more quickly towards a common customs tariff.

Mr. Mackinlay: While I associate myself with the plea by the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on behalf of Malta, will the Minister tell the House what advantage has been gained and what progress has been made towards extending the European Community by admitting the central European states of Poland, Hungary——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is a long way from Malta. We must move on.

Journalists (Middle and Eastern Europe)

13. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on media training for journalists from middle and eastern Europe.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The media have an important role to play in the process of political and economic reform in central Europe. The know-how fund has therefore set up a number of projects to train journalists and other media personnel from the area. Major programmes have been managed for the know-how fund by the BBC World Service and the Thomson Foundation, covering Poland, Hungary, the former Czecholsovakia, Romania and Bulgaria.

Mr. Bottomley: May I put it to my right hon. and learned Friend that if all 650 projects under the know-how fund are well managed by organisations as good as the World Service, we can be proud of the £50 million that we are putting into that work?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I think that his point is well made.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister make it quite clear that the services of Mr. John Birt will not be used on the courses for journalists to teach the comrades how to keep their zlotys and roubles out of the hands of the taxman?

Mr. Hogg: I would not choose to make such a trivial point.

Mr. Butcher: Does my hon. Friend agree that, given Russia's awful problems at the moment, the last thing the Russian people need is a rampant fourth estate? Does he further agree that the term tragedy is not an understatement as there is a high risk of immense problems and sadnesses emerging inside Russia which should be the top priority of the Foreign Office? Perhaps that should exercise the bulk of our energies instead of something that historians may see as a side-show around a town called Maastricht.

Mr. Hogg: I do not entirely agree with my hon. Friend who makes a serious point about the turmoil in Russia. That is true, but as much as we may sometimes dislike the press, we must recognise that a free and independent press is an essential condition in a pluralistic and democratic country—*[Interruption.]* We are doing our best to have one here. Although it is sometimes not all that easy to live with, I am in favour of a free and independent press. I think that is as true of Russia as it is of anywhere else in the world of which I have ever heard.

India

14. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on human rights in respect of relations with India.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): During my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's visit to India in January the Indian Prime Minister assured us of three things: that he attached importance to respect for human rights, that allegations of human rights abuses were investigated, and that those responsible for wrongdoing were punished.

Mr. Ainsworth: I am sure that we join the Minister in welcoming those moves and the proposals by the Indian Government to set up a human rights commission. However, until the Indian Government are prepared to open up the entire country to international organisations such as Amnesty International, there will never be confidence on human rights issues; stories of human rights abuses will continue to trouble people here and abroad. Will the Government continue to press the Indian Government to open up the entire country to the scrutiny of those international organisations?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We do press the Indian Government on that. The hon. Gentleman may be aware that the Indian Government are in touch with Amnesty International and India will be open to visits by its representatives, except in areas where their presence may cause tension.

Mr. Jessel: As the most important human right is the right to stay alive, and as India has an entirely exceptional problem with terrorism, which causes death, and as the

Indian Government are quick to investigate and punish acts of violence, should not India have the complete understanding and sympathy of the House?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As my hon. Friend suggests, it is most important that we recognise that human rights abuses and tragedies in India have most certainly occurred through terrorism, but terrorists are not accountable to the democratically elected people, whereas the Indian security forces are.

Israel

16. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will now propose that the United Nations should apply sanctions against Israel in order to enforce resolution 799; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United States Secretary of State's visit to the middle east has, we hope, paved the way for the resumption of the peace process. We hope that the Government of Israel will now build on the important first steps they have taken towards complying with Security Council resolution 799. We continue to believe that any move towards sanctions would be unhelpful at this juncture.

Mr. Gunnell: Does the Minister agree that while so many of the Palestinian deportees are still in the wilderness —and it looks as though they will remain there for several months—there is a danger that as they drop out of the immediate news they will cease to have the cutting edge that they have previously exercised in negotiations?

If the problem is not resolved and if those people are not given their human rights and restored to their homes, at what point would the Minister agree, first, that the United Nations should impose sanctions and, secondly, that action should be taken to ensure that Israel complies with resolution 799?

Mr. Hogg: We have made our position quite clear. We believe that the deportation was quite wrong and we have said so directly to the Israeli Government. Indeed, I shall do so again tomorrow when I meet the Israeli deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Beilin. What the Israeli Government have done thus far in compliance with resolution 799 is an important first step, but we hope that they will build speedily on that. It is in their interests to do so because while substantial numbers of deportees are out of Israel, that fact will stand in the way of a successful outcome to bilateral talks.

Fishing Incidents (Protests)

3.32 pm

Dr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food about the disruption caused by French and British fishermen.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. David Curry): French fishermen started their disruptive action, in protest at third-country imports, two to three weeks ago. They quickly turned to indiscriminate action against supplies coming into France from all sources, including the United Kingdom. On 21 February, they turned back a Brittany Ferries boat trying to enter Roscoff. On 23 February, they ran riot at Rungis market, causing £2·5 million of damage. There followed a series of violent actions in French ports against lorries carrying fish from Britain and the premises of importers dealing in fish from Britain. The rioting has continued, most recently at Nantes.

I and my ministerial colleagues have been in constant touch with the French to protest at that action and to ask them to bring the offenders to book, to ensure compensation and to restore free trade. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has personally raised the matter twice at Foreign Affairs Councils. My Department has been repeatedly in touch with the French, both directly and through the embassy in Paris.

At the end of last week, we succeeded in securing undertakings from the French that they would protect consignments of fish and shellfish sent by ferry from the United Kingdom to French ports. We are giving notice of those consignments. Fishermen are invited to contact our fisheries officers at their own ports to give that notice, which is telexed to the embassy in Paris and then communicated to the prefect so that he can ensure that he has sufficient forces available to protect those consignments. We have set up that mechanism, which is now working. Twenty-seven requests were made on Monday and a small number yesterday.

I believe that the arrangements would be effective, on the basis of experience we had in working in a similar fashion when problems arose over trade in lamb some years ago. Hon. Members will know that we are not entirely innocent in the matter of dealing with problems of this sort. Ministers will continue to follow the situation daily and will not hesitate to intervene. It is utterly repugnant to see the wilful and malicious destruction of food. Fish is a living and finite resource. There is a market for it, and the destruction of a resource on which livelihoods depend is stupid and morally offensive.

Unfortunately, a few British fishermen have now started action of the same kind. This action has not been sponsored by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, to whose chief executive I spoke a few moments ago to confirm that fact. Incidents occurred on 8 March in Peterhead, where Scottish fishermen boarded a Russian vessel and poured diesel oil on cod, and in Grimsby, where local fishermen held up a lorry carrying fish landed in Wales by a French vessel and prevented it from being put on the market. It is worth recording that some of the fish destroyed by French fishermen was landed in Britain by French vessels and trucked to France.

In Milford Haven this morning, local fishermen attacked a local consignment of French cod as it was being brought to land. I totally condemn this action also. There is no earthly purpose in our reading the riot act to the French Government, as we have done, about action of this kind if we then see it in the United Kingdom also. The same rules apply for everybody.

We shall do all we can to see that the law enforcement authorities in this country act firmly when fishermen attempt to take the laws into their own hands, and we shall keep up the strongest pressure on the French to do the same. These incidents raise questions of law and order, but there is also an economic aspect. There is certainly a problem on the fish market. There are several causes. One part of the problem is certainly imports—notably, imports of Russian cod. The Russian fleet is fishing much closer to home because currency uncertainty in the former Soviet Union makes it unprofitable to carry fish over long distances, and there is considerable barter for fish that the Russian market needs.

A second element, which we must not overlook, is the large volume of landing by our own fleet in February. This is a matter that fishermen, notably through the producer organisations, must tackle. Indeed, we have been talking to the producer organisations about means of addressing some of these problems. It is important that catches be phased, and it is important to market fish of the quality that consumers want.

The Community has taken steps to deal with the problem of imports. Minimum import prices for cod and a short list of other species were brought into effect on 26 February. Those prices are at the same level as the withdrawal prices that exist to ensure fairer prices to our own producers. In fact, they are analogous to measures that we took some time ago to protect the Scottish farm salmon market against imports from Norway.

I believe that this is an appropriate and measured response to what is still an unclear situation. I know that there are those who would like us to tighten up on imports to an even greater extent. The House must be aware that such measures, while they might be welcome to fishermen, affect the interests of processors, who import large quantities of cod and similar species every year from outside the Community. I must, of course, balance the interests of fishermen against those of importers, processors and consumers.

The Fisheries Council will meet in Brussels next week. Ministers there will look at all the issues involved and will consider what further action might be taken. We do not want a fish war, which would cause loss to everybody. We must assume our responsibility to prevent such a war, and we shall hold the French Government to theirs.

Dr. Strang: Does the Minister accept that the current level of quayside fish prices is destroying livelihoods and jobs on the catching side of the industry? Will he acknowledge the frustration felt by fishermen when, after days at sea, they land fish on the quayside only to have it withdrawn from the market to be turned into animal feed at prices that are inadequate to cover their costs and give them an income for their labour? Is he aware that that frustration turns to anger when the fishermen believe that their traditional markets are being lost to imports at prices that are hopelessly uneconomic?

To understand the frustrations of the industry is in no way to condone illegal protest action. I should be surprised

if the House were not united in deploring the incident at Peterhead, when diesel oil was poured on to fish in a Russian trawler. Such actions do not help the industry; they set it back by undermining public support for the cause. But surely the Minister must recognise that no industry is as tightly controlled by Government as the fishing industry. It is Governments who share out the fish in the sea. It is Governments who set the quotas and determine the conservation measures. Therefore, it is surely right that fishermen look to Government to resolve the crisis.

To that end, I wish to put several constructive points to the Minister. First, will he carry out an investigation into fish prices in the shops, which do not reflect the sharp drop in fish prices on the quayside? Is it the fish merchant or is it the supermarket and the shop which are buying cheap and selling dear?

Secondly, will the Minister set aside the review of the function of the Sea Fish Industry Authority and ask it to commence a major fish promotion campaign? It must be in the interests of consumers and of the industry to encourage an increase in consumption of this healthy food.

Will the Minister accept that the autonomous tariff quotas set by the EC for fish imports and due to come into operation on 1 April have been set too high? I take on board what the hon. Gentleman says about the interests of the fish processors, but we must recognise that we have a crisis in quayside prices.

The Minister must appreciate that the minimum import arrangements introduced by the European Commission two weeks ago are not working, largely because Russian fish, as a result of the declaration of fraudulent weights, are being imported at prices well below the reference prices set by the Commission.

I welcome the response that the Minister has received from the French Government, but does he agree that the French action had a severe effect on the British market because it prevented the movement of fish to destinations not only in France but throughout Europe? Because of the damage that has been done to the British market, will he closely monitor the situation to ensure that the action by the French Government is effective?

Is the hon. Gentleman further aware that this is one more example of too many boats chasing too few fish, and that we want a much enlarged decommissioning scheme?

Finally, will the Minister convene a summit of all the interests in the British fishing industry, including the catchers and the processors, to see whether they can agree some collective action which will help to resolve the crisis?

Mr. Curry: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making the essential distinction between law and order issues and economic issues. It is important to distinguish between the two. He said that the House would condemn the breaches of law and order, and I am sure that that is the case and it is proper that that should be so.

A large amount of imports come in frozen block form into the processing industry. Less comes in in fresh form, and that predominantly goes to the catering trade.

We have considered the level of prices. It was this Government who asked the Commission to convene the meeting which led to the minimum import prices. We have supplied information on the level and we shall continue to furnish that to Brussels.

If further action is needed, the Government will not hesitate to sponsor that action. For example, we must examine whether minimum import prices should apply to Alaskan pollock, which is one of the substitute cod species. That matter will no doubt be before the Council next week.

We reviewed recently the question of the Sea Fish Industry Authority. It has sufficient resources to pursue an advertising campaign. That is a matter for the industry, and the leaders of the catching industry are represented on the authority's council.

Autonomous tariff quotas will be finally decided at the Council next week. There was an agreement in anticipation of the economic area coming into effect, but it had not come into effect because of the Swiss vote. Therefore, we have some provisional arrangements in place. We would like somewhat lower quantities for haddock, for which we think there is not a case for a quota, and for cod. We must remember, though, that there are also catching opportunities—the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) will be aware of that. As part of that arrangement, roughly 10,000 tonnes of cod are available, largely for the Humberside fleet, in north Norway. We must ensure that, because it is an important element.

Minimum import prices have barely got under way. We will monitor them closely. Our authorities have instructions to enforce them effectively. The French action had the effects to which the hon. Gentleman referred, which is why we took firm action. It affected also ordinary fishermen who wanted to land their fish directly in France, because there is a lot of direct landing in overseas ports.

It was not just that there were too many boats chasing too few fish. The quotas were very large, many boats were tied up because of very bad weather in January, and there was a lot of fishing activity at the end of that month—simultaneous landings, which did nothing for the market place situation. I am constantly in touch will all elements of the industry—with part of it yet again tomorrow.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Before I call any other hon. Members, may I say that I am seeking very brief questions and very brief answers. I shall not allow this private notice question to run for very long.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I welcome the Government's efforts in respect of France and their representations to the French Government. Although we cannot condone law breaking—I make it clear to the Minister that the Scottish Fishermen's Federation condemns the incidents at Peterhead—there is undoubtedly a problem with market instability. Do the Government have the information and data on which to base a judgment as to the cause of the trouble?

Mr. Curry: The problem has three causes—imports that are difficult to tie down, probably coming from the former Soviet Union; a large amount of fish caught by British fishermen on the market; and some consumer reaction after a number of years in which very high fish prices obtained in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): While I agree with my hon. Friend the Minister that the few fishermen who sunk to the level of the French in adopting particular tactics unfortunately damaged the justice——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): What is wrong with it?

Mr. Harris: Everything is wrong with it?

Although those fishermen damaged the justice of their cause, is my hon. Friend the Minister aware of the deep anger and frustration felt by the whole industry in this deplorable situation in which exports to France are being blocked? Has my hon. Friend the Minister considered with my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General taking a case against France to the European Court of Justice to uphold the principles of the single European market?

Mr. Curry: We will explore all opportunities to uphold the principles of the single European market. At the moment I am concerned to provide redress for those who have suffered injustice, and the right for trade for those who want to trade.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): No one condones violence, but the problem in Grimsby was caused neither by violence nor by the destruction of fish. It was caused by the justified anger of British fishermen at seeing French vessels catch fish in British waters and then bring it on to the British market, while Grimsby fishermen were denied access to the French market. The price problem is caused by imports, not reference prices. It cannot be tackled by reference prices; it can only be tackled by dealing with Russian imports as a matter of dumping.

Does the Minister accept that the common fisheries policy must be based on two principles—access to markets, which is now threatened by the French, and a level playing field? Now that the French Government are to give £36·8 million in aid to the French industry, will the Minister get that aid stopped or provide similar aid to the British industry to prevent it from going bankrupt?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman knows that the House will shortly consider a statutory instrument that will make available £25 million for decommissioning.

It is not purely a question of imports. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I have received letters from a number of his constituents who are very concerned about the prospect of increasing import prices because of the importance to the processing industry. There is a balance to be struck.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): My hon. Friend the Minister said in his statement that the same rules must apply throughout the Community. Is he aware that that is not enough? They must not only apply

Mr. Curry: Yes, I am not able to send in the SAS, but there are times when I think that it would do a very good job—and not against British fishermen.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): It is generally agreed that we should feel angry with the French and with our own people—whoever they are—for damaging fish. Does the Minister realise, however, that we are in almost exactly the position in which we feared we would find ourselves when we were discussing the common fisheries policy last year? The problem is the sudden increase in the quota as against the two months at the end of the year when no fishing was allowed.

Will the Minister follow up the request made by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, East (Dr. Strang)? There must be round table discussions between the catching side and the processors to bring order and regulation into the market; otherwise we shall stagger on, month after month, with the fishermen feeling angry that they cannot obtain the prices that they want and the merchants falling out with them because they think that they are on the opposite side. In fact, they are all part of the same industry. Will the Minister get them together and thrash out the matter?

Mr. Curry: As the hon. Gentleman will know, some fishing went on at the end of last year, even if it was "black" fishing. I am already having discussions with the producer organisations, and I shall continue to do so. When I find an opportunity to get all sides together to try to reach a sensible arrangement, I shall do that as well, provided that it will protect trade.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): Is my hon. Friend aware that the fishermen of Poole are frustrated by, first, the inability of the French Government to enforce the law, and, secondly, the ability of our Government to impose conservation measures that are not observed on the continent? They see French fishermen catching fish off Poole which can be delivered in Cherbourg, while they are not allowed to land similar catches. No wonder there is a problem. Can we get it sorted out once and for all?

Mr. Curry: No restrictions currently apply to British fishermen in regard to days at sea. There is a free market in fish; the problem is getting that over to the French. I entirely understand the anger of British fishermen, including fishermen in Poole. The question is how they should express that anger.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): No one condones the destruction of fish, but does the Minister accept that he has a responsibility for the current destabilisation of the fish market? Does he understand the desperation of people who spend long periods at sea and then find that they cannot obtain a price on the quayside for the fish they have caught? Is it not ludicrous that good-quality fresh fish is being used for fishmeal, while imports that are often of poor quality are dominating the market? What will the Minister do about it?

Mr. Curry: It is patently nonsense to say that I should not have come back with a doubling of the haddock quota. The industry wanted that. As I have said, there is a problem of imports in the market place, but that is not the whole problem. We must strike a balance between the interests of all who are involved in the industry, and that is what we are trying to do. It is simply naive to suppose that a magic wand can be waved to make everyone agree on a course of action. There are conflicts in the industry, but we must achieve a balance: that is what politics is about.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): I support what my hon. Friend has said, particularly what he said about low fish prices. That is illustrated by the number of firms that have gone bankrupt recently in my port of Fleetwood. What still needs to be done to implement the decommissioning schemes as soon as possible?

Mr. Curry: The statutory instruments implementing the decommissioning schemes and relating to days at sea will be laid before the House in due course. I do not think that my hon. Friend will have too long to wait.

Mr. Matthew Taylor (Truro): The Minister will appreciate the fear that is felt by some of the most hard-working people in our community at a time when their livelihood is being taken away and they have no chance of alternative employment. As for the question of exports to France and beyond, is there any means of compensating our fishermen for the financial losses that they have experienced, and may continue to experience until the French Government are prepared to act? Perhaps the French should be asked to compensate our fishermen.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is entirely right: the French should be asked to do that. I am asking the present Government, and I shall ask the next.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Further to the question of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), does my hon. Friend accept that Kent fishermen now feel that insult has been added to injury? Not only are they denied access to foreign ports; the fish that are being landed here, undermining the domestic market, are sometimes part of an illegal quota caught by foreign ships off British shores. Will my hon. Friend commend the work of the fisheries protection fleet, and will he ensure that action will be taken in every complaint that the fleet brings to the Ministry?

Mr. Curry: I confirm absolutely that we get very good service indeed from the fisheries protection fleet and we benefit from the fleet's experience of where to look when it is looking for offenders.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Violence is wrong, but when considering how this problem affects Wales, will the Minister bear in mind the very serious unemployment there and the fact that there is no alternative work for these people? Does not the Minister know that the closure of defence establishments in Pembroke means that local people feel that what jobs there are should be protected? Will he bear that in mind when he considers the problem?

Mr. Curry: I am aware that fishing is an activity that goes well beyond the catching sector and that a large number of jobs are involved onshore and in the coastal communities. I wish to make sure that all those people are able to pursue their livelihoods in peace and freedom.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Is the Minister aware that I represent the largest number of shell fishermen in Britain—those on the south Devon coast? Is he also aware that many crab ships have been turned back at Roscoff and that there are tens of thousands of pounds worth of crabs rotting on the sea bed because they have had to be jettisoned? Is he further aware that a number of crab fishermen are losing their livelihoods and that one or two of them may even be going bankrupt? What does the Minister intend to do to make sure that that does not happen? What does he intend to do to get the money out of the French?

Mr. Curry: We shall take every action that we can to get the money out of the French. The important point is that that trade should resume as soon as possible. We cannot, however, send our police force over to France to do that, whatever our inclinations may be. The French have got to assert authority. I shall be taking up that matter with the Government who are in power now and with whatever Government may succeed them.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): May I emphasise the point that was made by the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie)—that the vast majority of Scottish fishermen deeply deplore the illegal action of a very small number of men in Peterhead? We do not even know if all those men are fishermen, so let us not condemn Scottish fishermen out of hand.

The problem, surely, is the common fisheries policy, which has always been the poor relation of the common agricultural policy, and the fact that there are flagrant violations of the CFP rules by French fishermen and others, with the collusion of their Governments. Only when all European Community fishermen adhere to the rules shall we have a sensible CFP. Does the Minister not agree that that is the message that he should be taking to the Council next week?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman knows that I was very careful indeed not to suggest at any point that fishermen as a whole were behind, supported or condoned this action. I repeat that I do not believe that that is the case. It would be stupid if that were to be the case. It is equally true that there are certain strains of lawlessness and law breaking in sections of the fishing community right across the European Community. They are doing someone else out of a job, whether it is by "black" fishing, or illegal fishing, or misreporting, or blocking trade. None of that is any good for people's livelihoods or for the long-term future of the fishing industry.

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): When my hon. Friend meets his French counterparts and the fisheries Ministers next week, will he add to his long list of complaints that of the landing and sale in French ports of undersized fish? That has long frustrated the fishermen of Hastings and Rye and has added to the anger they feel about the instability of the market for fish.

Mr. Curry: I shall certainly do that, though my hon. Friend will appreciate that my French opposite number is somewhat difficult to get hold of at the moment as he is campaigning. However, when I have a French fisheries Minister to talk these matters over with for some time, I shall certainly raise that issue.

Mr. Skinner: Has not the Minister got a cheek to attack those fishermen in Britain who destroyed fish in order to try to protect their own livelihoods when he, as a Minister, along with the rest of them, has destroyed during the past 14 years millions of tonnes of food because of the common agricultural policy? If he really wants to take on the French, why does he not tell his right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to tell them that the French are not going to sell electricity to Britain and that we are going to cut the interconnector and save six British pits? That is the way to deal with them.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman has ranged rather widely, but for people who depend on fish to destroy fish, which is a living resource, is a pretty perverse form of self-preservation.

Mr. Gallie (Ayr): Does my hon. Friend accept that the illegal actions of the French fishermen follow the illegal actions of French farmers and French lorry drivers? Although I welcome his comments about compensation

[Mr. Gallie]

for fishermen after recent events, will he consider the compensation claims made by hauliers and farmers last summer, or even before?

Mr. Curry: Yes, I shall certainly do that. I realise that it is a problem that goes wider than fisheries alone.

Points of Order

4 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have, as a matter of courtesy, informed the President of the Board of Trade that I should be raising this point of order with you this afternoon.

As you will recall, the President of the Board of Trade used yesterday's Opposition day debate on manufacturing, industry and unemployment to make his first on-the-record response to the Select Committee on Trade and Industry's report on British energy policy and the market for coal. I believe that that was a grave discourtesy to the Committee, which was not given advance notice of the President's intention to comment on the report, although I understand that the press were.

The matter was raised at our Committee meeting this morning. The Secretary of State will be receiving a letter, which questions not only his discourtesy but his rather selective, inaccurate and inadequate analysis of our report. It was also discourteous to the House, which has repeatedly been promised an opportunity to debate the Select Committee's report and the Government's response when the Government eventually publish their repeatedly delayed White Paper on the coal crisis.

In order to prevent such an incident recurring and to fulfil the Government's commitment to the House, the Select Committee and, indeed, the miners, it is vital that the Government publish their White Paper and give notice of their intention to devote a full debate to both reports without delay. Anything else would be unacceptable to the British people.

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker; I seek your guidance. The record of the President's statement is published in column 824 of yesterday's *Hansard*, but clearly it is incorrect. In a reference to the report, he said that the gas and nuclear industries were considered but that the Committee had made no recommendation. That is clearly incorrect——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not discuss policy with me. He must raise with me a point of order with which I, as Speaker, can deal.

Mr. Clapham: I raise the point to correct the record.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman cannot correct the record of the House through me. He must find other methods of doing that.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Will you take note, Madam Speaker, that there is considerable bitterness and exasperation in the coalfields of Britain that well nigh half a year has passed since the President of the Board of Trade made his announcement? There is deep anxiety, but, despite the fact that the coalfields have been waiting desperately for a statement from the Secretary of State, he chose not to inform anyone, except the press, that a debate on manufacturing industry would be devoted to the future of the coal mining industry. Will you please consider whether the right hon. Gentleman has acted responsibly in this matter?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. If I am given an opportunity to reply and do not have any further points of order, I hope that I can reply adequately to the points raised so far. However, there are two hon. Members standing who wish to raise points of order on this matter. I hope that they are points of order with which I can deal.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I seek your guidance, Madam Speaker. The President of the Board of Trade's statement, recorded in column 824, is not incorrect —I understand that he made the statement as printed— but it is at variance with the Select Committee's recommendations. Can you advise us how we can get a statement from the President of the Board of Trade—by means of a private notice question or by any other method —to qualify why he tried to mislead the House yesterday?

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): When the President of the Board of Trade made a statement on 19 October about the 31 pits, you, Madam Speaker, were in the Chair, and heard it along with the rest of us. A select Committee was told to do the job at the same time as the President of the Board of Trade's own investigation. The Select Committee has met and reported, but we have not debated the contents of the report in the Chamber.

The point of order for you, Madam Speaker, is this. My hon. Friends on the Committee have not had a chance to discuss the report in the Chamber, yet the President of the Board of Trade decided to do his own hatchet job on it yesterday. The Select Committee was told by the House to do that job, and the President of the Board of Trade should not have abused his position yesterday. That is the question that should be answered, and that is why he should be brought here to answer.

Madam Speaker: May I respond to one or two of the points of order that have been raised? As some hon. Gentlemen know, it might be better if they raised the matter with the Leader of the House at business questions.

To take the serious point of order raised by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn), I place on record the fact that the report of the Select Committee to which he referred is, as he knows, in the public domain. Even so, it is wise for the Select Committee to take up the matter with the Secretary of State, and I am delighted to hear that it has done so. For the moment we must leave the matter there.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As you are aware, last night some English Labour Members sought to defeat some rating and valuation orders which apply to Scotland. Had those orders been defeated in the Division Lobbies, that would have added significantly to the costs of Scottish industry and caused unemployment in Scotland. As you are aware, there are more such rating and valuation orders on the Order Paper today, one of which—the draft Oil Related and Petrochemical Plants (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993—relates directly to my constituency —*[Interruption.]* If that order were defeated, rates for oil companies would be increased by about 85 per cent.——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman cannot argue with me about the contents of the order to which he refers. If he will raise a point of order with me, I shall try to deal with it.

Mr. Robertson: I should like to ask whether you have had any intimation that the Opposition intend to divide the House on the orders, defeat them, and so put up costs?

Madam Speaker: I have no idea at all what is likely to happen this evening, just as I do not have much indication of what the House will do on most evenings. It would be most helpful to all of us if we knew.

BILL PRESENTED

GANGMASTER

Sir Richard Body presented a Bill to require gangmasters to be licensed by justices: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 23 April, and to be printed. [Bill 155.]

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 97(1) (Matters relating exclusively to Scotland),

NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE

That the Matter of the National Health Service in Scotland, being a Matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

Question agreed to.

Church of England

4.7 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to terminate the establishment of the Church of England in England; to make provision in respect of the Temporalities thereof; and for connected purposes.

The main purpose of my Bill is to allow the House to start to consider whether the time is ripe to disestablish the Church of England in England. Hon. Members on both sides of the House—from Ministers, including the Prime Minister, to senior figures in the Labour party, including the Leader of the Opposition, as well as my own party colleagues and hon. Members from the nationalist and Unionist parties—are now all discussing constitutional reform. It would be odd if the debate on what would be an appropriate constitution for Britain in the next century did not also address the question whether it is right and appropriate that in England, uniquely among the four countries in the United Kingdom, there should remain a direct and daily constitutional and practical link between the Church and the state——

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Uniquely? What about Scotland?

Mr. Hughes: Uniquely in England in this respect. The position in Scotland is different, and I shall deal with that in a moment.

If I were given leave to bring in my Bill I should seek to draft, carefully and with the co-operation of colleagues from both sides of the House, a Bill which would reflect the important elements of this subject. I seek to achieve maximum agreement and I am grateful to colleagues from other parties who have shown their willingness to support the measure, if leave to introduce it is given by the House this afternoon.

On a brief light-hearted note, I am also encouraged to believe that it is worth introducing a ten-minute Bill by the fact that about two years ago I introduced a Bill in which I proposed that the Queen should pay tax. That produced a result sooner than I had expected. Although I do not expect the disestablishment of the Church of England to be quite as easy a change to achieve, I believe that it is proper that such issues should be put on the agenda so that they can then be considered inside as well as outside the House.

For the record, I declare my interest. I am a member of the Church. I am an Anglican and I was baptised into the Anglican Church in England, although I was confirmed in the Church of Wales. I should add that I do not think I suffered any disadvantage from moving from the established to the disestablished church at the age of 11.

The premise on which I base my argument is that the Church of England should, like the church universal, be a serving Church and not a ruling Church.

The matter has been the subject of regular review. Over 20 years ago, the Archbishop of Canterbury set up a commission under Owen Chadwick which in 1970 reported on the relationship between Church and state. Under Lord Callaghan of Cardiff when he was Prime Minister, changes were brought about in the way in which bishops were nominated and chosen by the Prime Minister of the day. It is therefore not unusual to put the matter on to Parliament's agenda; it has been on Parliament's agenda in one way or another for generations.

Ever since Henry VIII set up the Church of England, for a uniquely personal reason, questions have been asked about whether it is appropriate for the Church-state status quo to continue. The Church of Ireland was disestablished more than 100 years ago and we cannot argue that Christianity has suffered in Ireland as a result of that move. More than 50 years ago, the Church of Wales was disestablished and it cannot be argued that Christianity has suffered in Wales as a result of that move. There is an established Church in Scotland, but it does not have the same constraint on it—for example, in terms of the requirement to pass legislation for approval to this place, as the Church of England currently does. Anglican Churches around the world are not normally established or linked formally with the state. In general, other Churches around the world are not established either.

This initiative is not aimed at demoting the role of Christianity or of religion in society. My argument is not that we now have a multicultural and multi-ethnic Britain in which Christianity is less relevant. That is not an argument, because many who have come as immigrants since the war have been Christians, although from other cultures and ethnic backgrounds. If they are not Christians, many of them are people of other faiths. Many have a great commitment to the idea of a Christian or at least a theist moral underpinning of society. The last thing I would argue is that Parliament should undermine the Christian and other theological principles that many in our society hold dear.

I argue that structural changes should take place. My proposals do not mean that we do not want to keep a place for religious or Christian broadcasting. They do not mean that we do not want to keep a place for religious or Christian education. They do not mean that we do not want to keep one day of the week different from the others. Those issues have nothing to do with the established role of the Church and can all be guarded in separate legislation.

Four obvious changes need to be made. The first is timely, as Parliament is about to consider the measure passed by Synod to permit the ordination of women priests. Why should we continue with a legislative form of supervision based on the assumption that we cannot say no to measures from the Church without causing a constitutional crisis? That is a ridiculous state of affairs.

Secondly, as we discuss what reforms to make in the composition of the other place, the second Chamber, the House of Lords, we should ask whether it is any longer justifiable that 26 bishops—two archbishops and 24 bishops by seniority—should have guaranteed places in the legislature of Britain, when neither the head of any other denomination of the Christian Church nor of any other faith has such a place. Lord Soper and Lord Jakobovits happen to be members of the House of Lords, but that is by individual selection and not on any other basis. In addition, Anglican ordained ministers cannot be elected to this House; that may no longer be appropriate either.

Thirdly, it is arguable that it is no longer appropriate for the Prime Minister of the day, if an Anglican or a Christian and even more so if an agnostic or an atheist, to choose the diocesan bishops of the Church of England.

Fourthly—I am sensitive to the issue, but I raise it because it is important—one, two or many generations from now it may no longer be thought appropriate that the heir to the throne should have to be not just a Christian but an Anglican in order to succeed to the throne, when that person might otherwise be entirely qualified to do the job.

I seek to move the measure as a serious initiation of a debate which the House has deferred, although a wish to consider it has been expressed in earlier speeches and in early-day motions. I ask that the House allow the opportunity for the Bill to be introduced, printed and considered.

This proposal is not about undermining the Church or the faith in which I and many others believe. There is all the difference in the world between supporting the Church and supporting the Church as part of the establishment. I do not recall that Christ came to argue that the Church should be on the side of the establishment. The establishment of the Church of England is an accident of our history. I think that we can be just as Christian a country and arguably the Church could be much more effective a Church if it were disengaged from the constitutional shackles which so regularly impose themselves on it.

4.17 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South) *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Does the hon. Gentleman wish to oppose?

Mr. Cormack: Yes, Madam Speaker.

I wish to speak briefly about the Bill which the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) wishes to introduce. I do not for a moment question the integrity of his motives, but I do not believe that it is a subject for a private Member's Bill. The hon. Gentleman is proposing the greatest change of its kind since the Elizabethan settlement of 1558. To do that by means of a private Member's Bill, let alone a ten-minute Bill, seems wholly inappropriate. Although all the subjects which the hon. Gentleman listed deserve proper debate in the House, I think that he has jumped the gun to some degree, perhaps encouraged by his success with his taxation measure of two years ago. Now he is after one of the Queen's titles.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the most important measure ever to come to Parliament from the Church of England—the measure on the ordination of women. Now is not the time to debate that, but it is proper to refer to it, as the hon. Gentleman did in seeking to move the Bill. That measure would introduce a great change. I believe that, if it is effected, the Church of England will have turned itself into a sect and will possibly have forfeited its right to be the established Church anyhow. That may be proper, or it may not, in the view of hon. Members, but it ought to be debated in great detail after the measure on the ordination of women has been dealt with.

Parliament has laid down a procedure for dealing with the measure. First, it should come through the Ecclesiastical Committee, of which the hon. Gentleman and I are members. When that committee has decided whether it deems the measure expedient, there will perhaps be an opportunity for the Synod to reflect again, and perhaps not, and perhaps for the measure to come to the House.

At that stage, it would be wholly appropriate to have a debate on the future of the established Church and touch on all the matters to which the hon. Gentleman referred. That time is not now. Therefore it would be wrong for the hon. Gentleman to persist with the introduction of the Bill now and I hope that he will not be given permission so to do.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Thank you, Bishop, that is enough.

Mr. Cormack: The hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) might benefit a little if he went occasionally. Hope springs eternal in my breast, even when I look at the hon. Gentleman, although it takes some doing.

I respect a great deal of what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said. This is much too serious a move to be left to a private Member's Bill and a private Member, however exalted. Many hon. Members in the House still believe in the established Church. Many of us hope that the Church will come through its present travail and troubles and soon have a more decisive lead than it is receiving at present. I do not say "leader", because the present Archbishop of Canterbury will perhaps assert a leadership which, sadly, has been lacking to date. Now is not the time for this measure. I therefore seek to oppose it.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business), and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. David Wilshire and Mr. John Battle.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Mr. Simon Hughes accordingly presented a Bill to terminate the establishment of the Church of England in England; to make provision in respect of the Temporalities thereof; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 2 July, and to be printed. [Bill 156.]

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During the homily, it was suggested that the Church of Scotland was an established church. It is not; it is a presbyterian church. I am an episcopalian and I do not know what "established" means, any more than I know what that silly word, Euro-fraternalist, means, which I brought to your attention yesterday.

Madam Speaker: The House has become enlightened by what the hon. and learned Gentleman has just said.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A number of us clearly called "no"; we are therefore puzzled as to why there was no vote on the proposed Bill. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The challenger did not call out "no" when I called again. I called twice. The Chair always calls twice to be absolutely clear. There are occasions when the House becomes sloppy in responding to me. This was one such occasion. When I do not hear a second cry, I must make a decision, and I have just done so.

Prevention of Terrorism

Madam Speaker: Before I call the Secretary of State, I shall make an announcement. There is a lot of interest in the order and I plead with hon. Members to speak for only a short time so that I am able to call Members in all parts of the House.

4.24 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.

The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 is a vital part of our commitment to the defeat of terrorism. The Act is used much more frequently in Northern Ireland against both so-called loyalist and republican terrorism than on the British mainland. But here too, as we all know, Northern Irish terrorism continues to present the main terrorist threat.

Last year, the incidence of terrorist crime in Great Britain was higher than at any time since the Act was first introduced in 1974, and terrorist activity in Northern Ireland, remains at a high level. There is little doubt that the threat from terrorist crime will continue throughout the next 12 months. However, I can assure the House that it will meet with a continuing resolute response from the Government.

Let us look at what has been achieved over the past year as there have been considerable successes. In Northern Ireland, 404 people were charged with terrorist-related offences, including 97 with murder or attempted murder. Last year, and also in the previous year, more people were charged with murder than in any year since 1984. More than 300 people were convicted of terrorist-related offences, and more than 200 weapons and two tonnes of explosives have been found.

Since the beginning of last year, 19 people have been charged in Great Britain with serious terrorist-related offences such as murder and conspiracy to cause explosions in connection with Northern Irish terrorism. All 19 were detained under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 using just those powers that I am inviting the House to continue today. We are debating the continuance order against the background of another considerable success for the police force and the security service in this country, with the discovery of a large cache of home-made explosives in London only yesterday.

In the face of the continuing threat, continuing success and the good use of the powers that a Labour Government originally thought necessary when they introduced the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974, I am extremely disappointed by the post-election reaction of the new Opposition Home Office team. It has offered talks, as it always does.

On previous occasions the Opposition team has offered to sit down and talk about the Act through the agency, originally, of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). He made it quite clear, as has the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), that the talks will be held on two preconditions: that we accept the Labour party's opposition to the two most important provisions in the Bill and the two most important provisions in the order. That is an extraordinary attempt by the Labour party to sound reasonable by talking about holding talks with the Government, while it really lacks sense and is declaring a continued opposition to the purpose of the order.

I acquit my opposite number—the hon. Member for Sedgefield—of any ill intentions. I accept that he is as opposed to terrorism as I am, and does not intend to give help or encouragement to terrorists in this country, but he is in danger of doing so by accident. As we shall, perhaps, discover, the hon. Gentleman does not understand the purpose of the order, the use to which it is put and the vital part that it plays in our defence against terrorist activity on both sides of the Irish sea.

Therefore, I shall begin by addressing the two issues said to trouble the Opposition. I hope to get the Opposition to understand what the prevention of terrorism measure is designed to do.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is not the Home Secretary playing on dangerous ground? The House of Commons is usually divided on virtually every subject under the sun. However, one form of unity that we have is our opposition to and loathing of all forms of terrorism, not least from Northern Ireland. Therefore, would it not be unfortunate and dangerous for the Home Secretary to give any impression other than that, while we are clearly divided over the measure, there is no division in our opposition to terrorism? Why should we give the terrorists the satisfaction of thinking that anyone in the House of Commons has time for them?

Mr. Clarke: I have just said that I accept that the Labour party is, of course, opposed to terrorism—as, I trust and firmly believe, are all hon. Members. We were agreed on the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) 1974 Act which, for eight years, was supported by both sides of the House after it was introduced by a Labour Home Secretary.

For the past 10 years, there has been a completely absurd division between Government and Opposition because the Labour party changed its mind about these powers. We have discovered that Labour is still withholding support for the Act. Although Opposition Members have not said so, as far as I can see they will vote against the order. As I accept that Labour opposes terrorism, I can only believe that it is giving encouragement to terrorists, who find these powers a considerable inconvenience, by accident.

The Opposition do not understand the purpose of the order, so I shall begin by trying to explain to them again the purpose of the Act and the order. I hope that I can get the Labour party to accept the failure of its opposition over the past 10 years and come onside in practice as well as in sentiment. The purpose of the Act——

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): Does the Home Secretary understand that the first of the two principal objections that we have outlined, which relates to exclusion orders, has been supported by his independent adviser? Our second objection relates to judicial intervention and the period of detention, and was contemplated by previous Home Secretaries. Although the Home Secretary may disagree—I understand the reasons that he is about to give—how can he possibly say that we are giving some form of closet support to terrorism by voicing objections, one of which has been supported by his independent adviser and the other contemplated by a previous Home Secretary?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman's point about my independent adviser is deliberately disingenuous. Some years ago the independent adviser once expressed reservations. The independent adviser, Lord Colville of Culross, who I trust is accepted as independent by the hon. Gentleman, recommends the renewal of the order in full. The hon. Member for Sedgefield uses that argument to try to give some respectability to his opposition to exclusion orders, the merits of which I shall shortly address. It is not true to say that the up-to-date advice of independent adviser is for change.

I propose to address the arguments on the detention orders, which were the subject of the hon. Gentleman's second point. It is not a judicial duty to look at the extension of detentions beyond 48 hours. I shall again explain the reasons why we are satisfied that the police and the security services occasionally need to seek leave to detain people for more than 48 hours. There is no point in the hon. Member for Sedgefield standing up, looking steely-eyed, and declaring that his position is reasonable. He is trying to find reasons to carry on clinging to the year in, year out, objections of his predecessor to the renewal of the Act, and by doing so he opposes the renewal of important powers. To that extent he is, although unintentionally, giving great encouragement to the PIRA and others who find these powers so damaging.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I served on the Committee that examined the Prevention of Terrorism Bill, and all my attempts to resist such invasions of human rights or proof or anything else by the then Labour Minister and the Labour Government were opposed. If Opposition Members care to read *Hansard* they will see that. They damn well should read it.

Mr. Clarke: I believe that my hon. and learned Friend was mistaken in some of the arguments that he made against the Bill at that time. It was a new and uncertain power and, as he has said, he was opposed by Labour. When the Bill, which apparently was different as far as the Opposition are concerned, was being introduced by a Labour Government, the hon. Member for Kingston Upon Hull, North said:

> "It would be most sad, however, if we were to worry now too much about the curtailment of liberties and later to have upon our consciences the deaths of our fellow citizens."

The hon. Member for Kingston Upon Hull, North, who is now the Opposition spokesman, also said:

> "While examining the detail, we cannot deny the principle or say under any circumstances that when our people are looking to us for support we in this House should deny it to them."—[*Official Report*, 28 November 1974; Vol. 882, c. 700.]

That is what he said when a Labour Home Secretary sought those powers. It is time for some effect to be given to what ought to be a bipartisan consensus on how to tackle terrorism and for the Opposition to stop retreating into obscure arguments about the detail and to give us the powers that unfortunately, we continue to need.

Mr. Blair: The Home Secretary has begun by playing exactly the politics that one would expect of him, and it is unworthy of him to do so. Let me pick him up on that point, so that the House is in no doubt about the nature of our objection and the offer that we have made to him.

On exclusion orders, the Home Secretary suggested that his independent adviser had resiled from his present position. Let me quote from this year's report, just published, in which Lord Colville says:

> "My own views on this power"—

the exclusion power—

> "are well-known, but it is encouraging that its use is diminishing."

He has in no sense resiled from his earlier view; he has merely accepted that the Home Office has no intention of changing its view. Exclusion orders are still rejected by the Home Secretary's adviser. Judicial intervention, on which we have been found in breach of the European convention, was contemplated by previous Home Secretaries. In those circumstances, to suggest that we are against the entire nature of legislation to prevent terrorism is an outrage.

Mr. Clarke: First, Lord Colville has recommended that the Act and the powers be renewed in their entirety. The hon. Gentleman has disingenuously left out that point in all three of his interventions. When we talk about playing politics, the hon. Gentleman is making it sound as though he is suddenly more robust in supporting the Government and wants talks about how we can make the fight against terrorism more effective, but, as I think he will demonstrate at the end of the debate, he will then vote against the powers that we need.

The offer that he says he has made is to have discussions that will lead to the suspension of the exclusion orders, the ending of the exclusion orders and the introduction of a judicial process after 48 hours. He requests talks on the basis that the most important powers in the Act are not used.

If the hon. Gentleman considers that his case has merit and not simply a new type of Clintonesque style, let us move on to the issues.

Mr. Blair: Will the Home Secretary give way?

Mr. Clarke: No. I am seeking to explore whether there is any substance behind the new smiling face on the Opposition Front Bench. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. There are too many conversations and sub-debates. If hon. Members want to catch my eye, they should keep quiet now.

Mr. Clarke: As the House will appreciate, the Act is mainly designed to help the investigation and prevention of terrorism. People are not usually charged or brought to trial in the courts under the parts of the Act that are in dispute.

The Act is aimed at helping the investigation and prevention, where possible, of terrorist incidents before they happen. In attempting to prevent terrorism, powers sometimes have to be exercised in advance of a terrorist act. In some cases, preparations may not have reached the stage where there is any sustainable evidence of a specific crime.

In those circumstances, it is false to draw analogies with ordinary criminal law. When somebody is facing a charge for an actual offence, evidence is presented by one side or the other and there is a judicial determination. However, because of the threat of terrorism, we have to introduce in the Act specific powers designed to thwart terrorist acts in advance and to further the investigation of them. That is why specific powers are needed for the curse of terrorism.

[Mr. Clarke]

The first of those powers, to which the Opposition continue to object, is the power of exclusion. It is not used frequently, and I certainly use it with considerable care. It is used less than previously because I would not use such powers which genuinely run the risk of curtailing the civil rights of innocent people. It is a power to be used with great circumspection. I use it in cases where I am satisfied that a particular person is involved in terrorism—such people almost invariably have a history of that—and there is sufficient information to satisfy me that there is a risk of continued terrorist involvement.

In such a case, however good the information is it cannot be presented in court to secure the prosecution of someone who has committed a particular terrorist act. In general, we are talking about would-be terrorists, where I am satisfied that they are travelling to this country to plan a terrorist act, if they have the opportunity to do so.

As Home Secretary, I use the power to prevent terrorists from coming to this country to plan and to carry out those attacks. In a few instances, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland uses the power to stop people going the other way. We certainly succeed in disrupting the free movement of terrorists between Northern Ireland and mainland Britain. I am quite convinced that the use of that power has a substantial effect in frustrating and disrupting the activities of terrorists. It has been suggested that an alternative to the power would be to mount surveillance operations on those who would otherwise be excluded. I am satisfied that that would not work in practice.

The Opposition claim to be leaping to the defence of some great civil liberty. In fact, they are trying to stop me overruling the right of people with a long track record of serious terrorism to come across the Irish sea. They pretend that they want to come to visit relatives, to have a holiday, or to exercise some other great civil right.

I remind the House that during the past year I have made only two new exclusion orders. There were 81 still extant at end of the year. I renew them when I am satisfied that the threat posed by a named person wishing to come here is sustained. That is the lowest total of exclusion orders for 10 years; that is the exclusion order power that the hon. Member for Sedgefield insists is removed before we can have the fairly useless talks about the Act that he has offered.

It is an important power used to prevent people who I am satisfied have an involvement in terrorism from coming to this country. It is used sparingly. It is absurd of the Opposition to try to construct some elevated arguments of principle for removing that important power, thereby making us look for some other method of keeping tabs on 81 people who have been involved in terrorism.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. and learned Gentleman appears to be unsure whether to argue that the power is a fundamental necessity because it is used so often, or whether it is fairly trivial because it is not used very often. His own independent advisers have said that only a small number of cases are involved, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman acknowledges. The advisers—not just Lord Colville, but his previous adviser—said that the power could be used in a different way and that surveillance could be carried out in such a manner as to make an exclusion order unnecessary.

I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman that previous Home Secretaries have said that exclusion orders would outlive their usefulness at some point of time, which is precisely what the right hon. and learned Gentleman's adviser has now advised. In those circumstances, how can he say that our proposition is extreme?

Mr. Clarke: I have said that it is an important power, which is used sparingly to ensure that there is no infringement of civil liberties. I am quite satisfied that the alternative of surveillance of 81 people on both sides of the Irish sea, wherever they might be at any given time, is not satisfactory. The hon. Gentleman is defending not an important point of civil liberty, but a silly position adopted by his predecessors, which he does not have the nerve to abandon. He takes the same position on the extensions of detention, which is the second power on which he tries to elevate an argument of great principle.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): The right hon. and learned Gentleman said that two new exclusion orders had been made during the past year. Does he agree that almost all such orders arise out of intelligence gathered in Northern Ireland about people who wish to come to England, Scotland or Wales? Does not the exclusion of just two people say something about the level of hard intelligence that has been gathered, or has the capacity to be gathered, under the Act?

Mr. Clarke: We gather a great deal of intelligence in Northern Ireland, and we are strengthening the gathering of intelligence in Great Britain. The relationship between all those involved is extremely good. We use that intelligence in a whole variety of ways. It is true that there are 81 orders extant and that I have added only two new ones during the past year. They are based on sufficient information to satisfy me that a particular person is engaged in terrorism and that preventing him from travelling backwards and forwards between Northern Ireland and mainland Britain would disrupt his would-be activities.

That is not, in itself, a measure of the amount of intelligence that we have gathered. I hope that the hon. Gentleman was encouraged by what I said at the beginning of my speech about the number of people being arrested, charged and convicted. I assure him that, through intelligence gathering and every other legitimate police activity, we will build on that success.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I hope that the Home Secretary, through the very exchanges that are now taking place, is beginning to understand the need for the talks offered by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) and my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). The issue is not just one of civil liberties, although that is important; it is about effectiveness. Terrorist activity has gone up while the use of the Act has gone down.

The dangerous aspect is that the Act is still used by terrorist groups on both sides in Northern Ireland to indicate the political nature of the issue. It is the only case in which a politician can determine a judicial decision; the matter does not go through the courts. Because of that, the terrorists—especially on the republican side, but also on the unionist side—make enormous propaganda use of the Act. It is counter-productive because it acts as a recruiting sergeant for the IRA.

Mr. Clarke: I do not believe that. It is an important point that the Opposition should address. I will deal with the hon. Gentleman's point about cases being matters for judicial decision when I come to deal with the extensions of detention, because the point applies strongly there. They are not judicial decisions; they are not two competing pieces of evidence being examined and decided on by a member of the judiciary. By their very nature, they cannot be so. They are the sorts of actions taken by politicians in every other country when there is intelligence about terrorist activity by an individual. Constraints must be imposed.

If the arguments of the terrorist organisations were not given some credibility by respectable democratic politicians sustaining their opposition to the Act, the terrorists would not get anywhere in trying to persuade anyone other than their committed supporters that the Act was a justification for their actions or that it was helpful in recruiting.

We cannot make exclusion orders a judicial process —I do not think that anybody has ever tried. By their very nature, exclusion orders are based on the fact that we have sufficient information to satisfy a Home Secretary, answerable to the House of Commons, that a particular person has sufficient involvement in terrorism for it to be desirable to prevent his movement between Northern Ireland and mainland Britain. It is an important power, the renewal of which was recommended by Lord Colville. It should be renewed.

Mr. Blair: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has alleged that our position on exclusion orders lends credibility to the IRA. Is he making the same criticism of his own advisers, who advised him to adopt exactly our position?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is clutching at straws. Our adviser, Lord Colville, has recommended the renewal of the Act, which is what the hon. Gentleman opposes. He flies in the face of Lord Colville's advice. I advise him to stop citing Lord Colville in his support, because that is somewhat inconsistent.

The Opposition have criticised us for not bringing the Act into line with the outcome of the hearing that took place under the European convention on human rights. Let us look at that issue, which is narrow but important. It is true that the European Court has held that article 5(3) of the convention is breached if detainees are not brought before a court after four days' detention. The court is quite satisfied about the first four days, but it has said that, thereafter, there should be judicial intervention. This is the point that the Opposition are pursuing. Following the finding to which I have just referred, the British Government have always had a derogation from the convention. We do not believe that what the Opposition suggest is a practical way of proceeding, as I shall explain in a moment.

In response to the claims that we are breaching civil liberties and providing a recruiting sergeant for the IRA, let me remind the House of the care with which this power is used. Last year, I granted only 17 detention extensions under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. That is the lowest number since 1984. We are exercising these powers with great care. In 10 of the 17 cases, detention lasted only four days, so in respect of those cases there is no dispute. Cases in which longer extensions are sought are considered very carefully by me.

There was a grand total of seven cases in which I concluded that detention should last more than four and up to seven days. In other words, the power is used very sparingly. However, these are serious cases. Terrorism is serious. Seven is a large number of cases when one is talking about people engaged in very serious, extremely dangerous, terrorist activity.

The cases in which detention beyond the first four days is necessary tend to be those involving serious investigation that has to be continued. Usually, but not always, this arises from the need for forensic tests. Sometimes it is the need for searches, sometimes the need to follow up leads from other contacts, and so on. Without this power in those circumstances, there would be cases in which people charged with terrorism could walk free. It has been said that extension beyond four days should be by way of judicial decision, that a judge should be called in to make a decision about the final three days. First, that was not the conclusion of Lord Shackleton in his report of 1978. Nor has it ever been the conclusion of Lord Colville, particularly in his report of 1987. So far as I know, the view of Lord Colville remains the same.

This is an executive rather than a judicial decision. It is with the greatest respect that I say that the decision of the European Court was wrong. The system here is different from that on the continent. On the continent, people can be detained for very much longer, the papers having been considered by a comparatively minor member of the judiciary, who is probably supervising the whole prosecution. We do not have the juge d'instruction; we do not have the supervisory magistrate; we do not have a professional investigative judiciary. What we have is the careful exercise of executive power. What we have here is an executive rather than a judicial act. In judicial proceedings, someone would present to the judge all the evidence upon which the further extension was called for. The defence would examine the evidence and would put arguments to the judge, and, on the balance of argument, a judicial decision would be made.

In this country, the suspect is not given the information that is being followed up. We do not reveal how alleged involvement in crime is being investigated. It would be the height of folly to do so. Such people are often anxious to get out as quickly as possible to frustrate the investigation. Thus, an extremely serious executive act has to be taken by the holder of my office. The Home Secretary has to be satisfied that there is good reason for extending the detention up to seven days.

If that power were not exercised, or if it were weakened, as, in effect, the Opposition would do, terrorists would be released after four days. They would melt into the population like snow off a ditch, and then the results of the forensic tests would reveal that the authorities had the right people in the first place and that they should have been charged.

Mr. Blair: That is an outrageous suggestion. The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows perfectly well that, while he wants detention to be extended by executive act, we believe that this should be achieved by way of judicial intervention. I am surprised that he should find this extraordinary. Judicial intervention is the normal course in the rule of law. It is absolute nonsense to suggest that after

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four days a person would walk free. The evidence would be presented to the judge in exactly the same way as it is presented to the Home Secretary. As the European Court found, and as a previous Home Secretary from the right hon. and learned Gentleman's own party was prepared to confirm, the difference here is the difference between proper judicial intervention and executive action. This goes to the very heart of the issue.

Mr. Clarke: The judge would be carrying out an executive act. The difference is that he would be new to the case. Judges do not normally take executive action of this kind. A judge presides at judicial proceedings in which competing evidence is openly exchanged and he makes a decision. That is the role that is most appropriate to a judge. Let me state what I see as the difference between us. I am confronting the reality of the need to deal with terrorist incidents. I am dealing with the reality of what is required for proper investigation of allegations of involvement in terrorist activities on this side of the Irish sea and in Northern Ireland. On the other hand, the hon. Gentleman is using detailed points, which in my opinion are not sustainable, to justify opposition to the renewal of these powers.

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): Why does the Home Secretary say that Lord Colville never recommended judicial intervention? In the report in which the noble Lord was specifically critical of extended detention, saying that it must be examined again, he said that the new model ought to follow the example of Scottish and Isle of Man procedure, which involves judicial intervention. That is why Scotland was not arraigned before the European Court. Why does the Home Secretary say that Lord Colville took up a position opposite to that which, in fact, he did take up?

Mr. Clarke: I repeat that my understanding of Lord Colville's report of 1987 is that it did not take up that position. Lord Colville, having supervised the operation of the Act, recommends the renewal of all its powers. On the basis of my experience so far in this office, I believe that to be good advice, and I commend it to the House. I believe that our power to investigate and prevent terrorism in Great Britain and Northern Ireland would be greatly weakened if this order were turned down by the House.

Mr, John Greenway (Ryedale): My right hon. and learned Friend has referred to those who have to face the reality of action against terrorists. I am sure he agrees that the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the other security forces in Northern Ireland do an absolutely superb job. Does he know that, when the Select Committee on Home Affairs visited Belfast recently, the deputy Chief Constable of the RUC pleaded with its members to see that the emergency provisions were renewed, lock, stock and barrel?

Mr. Clarke: I am aware of that. Perhaps I was naive in hoping that that point could be brought home effectively to the Opposition in the course of this debate. So far, we have not succeeded in that respect.

Let me turn to Lord Colville's report. The noble Lord gave the operation of these powers a clean bill of health. On the question of exclusion orders, he observed that the power had been used sparingly in 1992 and that the machinery was working effectively. He emphasised the importance of the work of the three independent advisers who, having reviewed the cases of those wishing to make representations against exclusion, advise the Secretary of State as to their findings.

I agree wholeheartedly with Lord Colville's observations. The advisers fulfil a most important role, each undertaking his work with very great care and diligence. I do not undertake always to accept their advice, although, so far, it has invariably been accepted. These people provide another important check on the use of the power and a safeguard for the individual. Lord Colville's report also records his finding that the proper criteria are being carefully observed in considering whether extensions of detention should be granted.

With regard to the other powers under the Act, the report goes on to present a good picture of the way in which the police have responded to complaints from members of the public about the conduct of checks under the Act. I am glad to hear it, because the co-operation of the public with the police is essential.

Lord Colville's report on the operation of the Act last year approves of the way in which the powers are being exercised and recommends their renewal, and—I repeat —the Opposition are scratching about trying to find some means of justifying the rather surprising repetition of their vote this evening.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: The law of Scotland was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), but he has got the law of Scotland wrong. Even if he had not, and if he had visited the Province, which I am sure he has, this is nothing to do with a religious war; it is purely a mafia operation which, I regret, is funded by the money thrown at Northern Ireland by the British Government, and the sooner we recognise that the better.

Mr. Clarke: I shall come later to the money-gathering activities of the terrorists. I agree with my hon. and learned Friend that, as the difficulties continue, it becomes more and more clear that large numbers of terrorist organisations are heavily involved in arguing over the proceeds of criminal activities to finance what they are doing. The border between criminality and politics is becoming ever increasingly blurred in the continuing campaign—*[Interruption.]*—so far as the objectives of the terrorists are concerned. So far as the politics of the Opposition is concerned, their tactics are not criminal—I have always conceded that—they are just careless and an attempt to justify their past activities.

I have obtained a quotation to confirm what I said about Lord Colville. In addition to the clean bill of health that he has given, I now have his recommendation for this year, which has been ignored by the Opposition. The December 1987 report deals with the detention powers and sets out in chapter 12 the attractiveness at first sight of the argument that the decisions should be made by a High Court judge.

In paragraph 12.1.3, Lord Colville said:

"On reflection I believe that such a change would be wrong. It would be cosmetic rather than substantial".

I shall not continue to quote, but Lord Colville supports the argument that I am making. *[Interruption.]* I can read it all if the Opposition wish, but I do not think that they are open to argument. In paragraph 12.1.6, Lord Colville concludes:

"On examination, therefore, this proposition adds nothing to safeguards for civil liberties".

Mr. Hattersley: I think that the Home Secretary quoted from the 1987 report. Let me quote Lord Colville in 1991 when he called for a bold new initiative which he regarded as irresistible since the power should be changed. He said:

"It is now perhaps irresistible that some new tribunal will be set up to oversee the powers"—

that is what we are calling for—

"it could draw on Scottish or Channel Island methodology"—

that is what we are calling for. That is four years after the quotation that the Home Secretary has just given us.

Mr. Clarke: The Opposition are calling for a judicial involvement in the extension of the powers. The right hon. Gentleman may wave his finger, but he is not on the Front Bench now. What is being called for is judicial intervention. The arguments against that were set out by Lord Colville in 1987. They were substantial and they remain substantial. I agree with them. I have one advantage over both Opposition spokesmen, in that I have operated the powers. I can assure them from experience that they would weaken the Act if their vote were successful. I assure them that, as they know perfectly well, they are going in the teeth of the up-to-date advice of Lord Colville that we should renew the powers that we are seeking today.

Mr. Blair: Lord Colville's point is not that a judicial intervention would inhibit the security services, which is the Home Secretary's argument; on the contrary, he is saying that he believes—I disagree for reasons that I shall give—that it will not safeguard the civil liberties of the detainee. The Home Secretary's argument is that if we put in judicial intervention that will inhibit the security services. It is that argument that Lord Colville specifically rejected.

Mr. Clarke: He rejects it rather more strongly than that, if we are to go into the detailed argument. He points out the difficulties of doing it that way at all. In paragraph 12.1.5—*[Interruption.]* the hon. Gentleman raised the point, so he must listen—Lord Colville says:

"In Northern Ireland and Scotland the number of High Court Judges is small enough to bring some consonance. In England and Wales, however, the practicality is different. These applications by the police would be made as a matter of urgency in the force area. The Senior Circuit Judge would often sit as a Deputy High Court Judge for the occasion; he or she would have great difficulty in communicating with colleagues who had been faced with similar applications. It is not a recipe for consistency. Apart from such Deputies, there are over 100 real High Court Judges who might have to make the decision."

A whole range of different people would be involved in making those decisions.

It is right that, as Lord Colville says, no improvement in civil liberties would result. In my judgment—it seems to me to be reinforced by Lord Colville's recommendation that we renew the powers this year—the practicality would fall down in every possible way. It is the most effective way of handling these things that the Secretary of State has to be satisfied that further detention is justified. It would weaken our effectiveness in dealing with allegations against terrorist suspects if the power were changed in the way that the Opposition recommend.

Mr. Blair: I do not want to interrupt unnecessarily; I simply say that, after the passage to which the Home Secretary referred, Lord Colville concludes:

"On examination, therefore, this proposition adds nothing to safeguards for civil liberties."

That is why Lord Colville is questioning the provision. At no stage in any of his reports—indeed, as I shall show, a previous Home Secretary said that he wanted judicial intervention—does Lord Colville say that it will prevent us from getting terrorists. That would be a substantial reason for rejecting our position. What is not a substantial reason is the reason given there.

Mr. Clarke: With the greatest respect, the hon. Gentleman is scrabbling about. In 1974, a Labour Home Secretary introduced the Act. Its powers were essential. The Conservative party has voted in favour of them consistently in opposition and in government ever since. In 1982 the Labour party went through what I would like to believe was a temporary period of left-wing aberration and, no doubt at the behest of some of its less desirable Members, things got completely out of hand and it suddenly started to vote against the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The hon. Member for Sedgefield and the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) are meant to be leading figures in the attempt to rescue the Labour party from the murk of the 1980s and to get it back on to a sensible course of cross-party agreement in those things that are essential in the fight against crime and terrorism. So far, neither of them is up to it. The Opposition have carried on having this silly vote each year, and they are scratching about to try to find reasons for it.

The power is used sparingly by the security services and police who are successfully making strides in combating terrorism in this country. It is time that the actions of the Opposition began to match their rhetoric, and they would best be matched by a vote in favour of continuing the provisions this evening.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook referred to Scottish methodology. There is no such thing. Fortunately, our law is based on principle, as is our party and as is our commitment——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. It is clear that that is not a point of order for the Chair; it is a point of information; a point in debate.

Mr. Clarke: Let me explain some safeguards that are already built into the emergency provisions legislation and which are being strengthened in two ways in Northern Ireland in order to try to meet legitimate concern, if it exists, about the way in which the emergency powers are used.

First, on 16 December last year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced the appointment of Sir Louis Blom-Cooper to the post of independent commissioner for police holding centres. His principal role as commissioner will be to observe, comment and report on the conditions under which terrorist suspects are detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act in the holding centres of Castlereagh, Gough and Strand Road. He will provide an independent check that the statutory and administrative safeguards are fully complied with. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is preparing codes

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of practice under section 61 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991, governing the detention, questioning, treatment and identification of suspects detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The codes will be modelled closely on the existing codes made under the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, amended to take account of the emergency legislation. The codes have been issued for public consultation, and it is hoped that they will be laid before the House in the near future.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): How will Sir Louis Blom-Cooper ensure that those matters are carried out in his absence?

Mr. Clarke: I am assured by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, who is in his place by my side, that a substitute will soon be appointed.

The question of terrorist finances was raised by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn). We have for several years been aware of the determined criminality of the provisional IRA's fund-raising methods. There is now reliable information that loyalist terrorist groups are becoming increasingly involved in serious and complex frauds and crimes of dishonesty.

One effective way of undermining terror campaigns is to starve the terrorist groups of the funds that they require. The financial provisions in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 are a significant component of our efforts to combat terrorist racketeering in connection with Northern Ireland. They have been used to good effect in stemming a number of traditional sources of terrorist funding and are regarded by the RUC as invaluable in its continuing efforts to combat terrorism.

Lord Colville has long advocated strengthening the Act's provisions in that respect, and his recent report recommends that the Government should seize the opportunity provided by the Criminal Justice Bill—presently under consideration in another place—to make some amendment to that legislation. That is just our intention. The Government will be introducing amendments to the Bill in Committee, with the aim of bringing the law on terrorist finances into line with many of the changes being made in the same Bill to the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986.

I will mention as briefly as possible two further Government measures taken during the course of the year. Last May, I announced that the lead for intelligence gathering against Irish republican terrorism in Great Britain would pass from the Metropolitan Police special branch to the security service. I make it clear again that the security service has not taken over responsibility for counter-terrorism from the police, who remain responsible for prevention and detection of terrorist crime, as for other forms of crime, and retain a national role in intelligence work.

The new arrangements came into effect on 1 October last year. Thanks to the efforts of both services, they are working well. As I intended, they are making the best use of the experience and expertise of each service, and we are steadily gathering more intelligence all the time. The new arrangements do not change the position in Northern Ireland, where the RUC retains primacy in all operational security matters.

The second measure is the extension of tape recording to terrorist cases in England and Wales on a trial basis for two years, from 1 December last year. I do not want to prejudge the outcome of those trials, which are being monitored by a broadly based steering group. If the trials conclude with a recommendation that such cases should be brought fully within the ambit of the PACE code of practice on tape recording, I shall welcome that—but difficult and serious issues must be considered first and, for the time being, I am keeping an open mind on that subject.

I have sought to remind the House of the terrorist threat and to explain as briefly as I can why it is important to ensure that the powers in the prevention of terrorism measures continue in force. Those powers are obviously used carefully and with discretion, backed by established safeguards that we keep constantly under review. The key point is that they continue to provide an important and necessary weapons in the fight against terrorism. At a time when we are achieving successes, it would be the height of folly to dispense with those powers.

I believe, as the hon. Member for Sedgefield often says, that this ought not to be an inter-party issue. We are entitled to expect the Opposition's support in our stand against terrorism in practical form, but their record since 1983, when they started voting against the Act, clearly shows that they are not yet ready to do that and to adopt the position that they occupied in Government in the 1970s. I am genuinely disappointed by that.

It appears that this year only the rhetoric will be changed slightly. The points being made and the policies are exactly the same. The origin of that policy goes back to a difficult time in the Labour movement, which the Opposition are no doubt trying to forget. If the Opposition are trying to forget and to break away from that, they should start changing Labour's actions. It would be welcome and reassuring to many if Labour did not just raise a smoke screen about talks but withheld its opposition to the renewal of the powers this year.

5.15 pm

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): We certainly owe a great debt of gratitude to our police and security services for their excellent work recently, and the new find of explosives announced today. They often work in circumstances of great danger and difficulty, and we pay tribute to them.

This legislation is debated every year because, as every Home Secretary who ever introduced it has said—at least until this year—it involves serious and fundamental departures from the normal processes of British law. It grants powers of detention and exclusion in respect of subjects of the United Kingdom which would otherwise be condemned without hesitation as contrary to the principles of British justice.

In the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, Parliament decided the reasonable outer limits of powers of detention and restraint, but the measures before us go beyond them. The majority of those arrested for terrorism could have been arrested under existing criminal law, rather than under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts. Those powers, introduced before the 1984 Act, are to cater for

cases in which, it is said, ordinary powers are insufficient. We should not forget that they are unique powers, to deal with a unique situation.

That is emphasised by the title of the legislation: the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989. The first Labour Home Secretary to introduce the power, in 1974, said that he did so with great reluctance. His opposite number on the Conservative Front Bench, now Lord Joseph, spoke of his "distaste" for the laws, although he supported them. In 1982, Lord Whitelaw stated that the Act

"makes considerable inroads into the civil liberties of which we are justly proud",

and he urged particular scrutiny of its powers. That is why they are subject to constant review.

Lord Shackleton reported in 1978, following pressure from the House that it would not agree to renewing the provisions in the absence of such a review, and Lord Jellicoe reported in 1983. In 1984, an annual process of review was established, first under Sir Cyril Philips, and then under Lord Colville. Following reviews, changes were made.

The annual nature of this debate emphasises the serious nature of the order. Of particular cause for concern are the speeches of recent Home Secretaries, especially that of the present Home Secretary today. Expressions of distaste, of concern, and of vigilance to ensure that we were not doing more than was necessary to combat terrorism, and the belief that the 1989 Act might be a necessary evil, have grown rather weaker with time. Today, for the first time, the Home Secretary made no such mention at all.

I hope that no right hon. or hon. Member believes that we should simply rubber-stamp an order of this nature. It comes before us every year precisely because we should carefully scrutinise its provisions. Those right hon. and hon. Members, some of whom are evidently among those on the Government Benches now, who believe that we should just rubber-stamp the measure—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]—and who show by their attitude that they think that it is wrong even to raise doubts about the measure's contents do not pay sufficient attention to the nature of our parliamentary democracy.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): I am trying to follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. May I ask him a simple question? A Labour Government introduced this measure, but for the past 10 years a Labour Opposition have opposed it. Were the Labour Government wrong to introduce it, or are the Labour Opposition wrong to oppose it?

Mr. Blair: I shall explain the precise reasons for the position that we have adopted. I hope to show the hon. Gentleman exactly why our position is entirely reasonable and justifiable; I simply ask him, and other hon. Members, to listen to the argument.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary quoted the words of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). Let me refresh the hon. Gentleman's memory: the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North said that the measures were necessary, and that we should not have the deaths of our citizens on our conscience. I support those sentiments: they were right then, and they are right now. Rather than just talking about getting tough with terrorists, why does the hon. Gentleman not give his support to the people who put their lives on the line?

Mr. Blair: We shall explain the nature of our objections. The hon. Gentleman should realise that Labour is prepared to separate the issue from party politics; it is the Conservative party which insists on turning it into a party political issue, despite our objections. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman, and other hon. Members, will listen to our objections to the order. I shall allow him to intervene if he considers those objections unreasonable.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: I should like to get on with my speech.

There are two fundamental flaws in the order as it is now drafted. Exclusion orders, and the absence of a judicial review of the extraordinary power of detention. Exclusion orders were seen from the beginning as the most temporary of the temporary provisions that we are discussing. Lord Shackleton expressed deep unease about them in 1978; Lord Jellicoe called for them to be severely restricted, and possibly removed altogether; Sir Cyril Phillips, the first independent adviser under the annual review, said that such powers were no longer justifiable; and Lord Colville, the present independent adviser, in 1987 and subsequently called for their removal.

It is not true that Lord Colville has resiled from his earlier view, as the Home Secretary said. He has done no such thing; he has merely accepted that it is not the Government's view. He has also repeated in his review this year that he believes the powers to be unnecessary. Conservative Members may disagree with the point that is being made. They may believe that exclusion orders are necessary. It can hardly be said, however, that objecting to exclusion orders is extreme or unreasonable.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: Conservative Members will not even listen to what I am saying. Objecting to exclusion orders can hardly be described as unreasonable or extreme, given that their abolition has been sought with increasing firmness by every independent adviser to the Home Secretary.

Mr. Nicholls: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for extending his usual courtesy and giving way to me. I remind him that his hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said of exclusion orders:

"It would be most sad . . . if we were to worry now too much about the curtailment of liberties and later to have upon our consciences the deaths of our fellow citizens."

Much as I respect the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), I must put it to him that he is now dissociating himself from the judgment of his hon. Friend because he knows that if he does not do so he will be unable to carry the left wing of his party. He stands condemned, in the House and the country, for putting the unity of his party before the priority of taking a stand against terrorism. That is the point that he ought to answer.

Mr. Blair: That is not often said, I must say.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) made it clear at that time that he believed that exclusion orders were necessary. If the hon.

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Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) reads the speeches made at the time, however, he will see that it was specifically said that those powers should be the first to go. The reason why there was an independent review—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps hon. Members will at least listen to my replies to their questions. The independent review was set up precisely to establish whether measures such as exclusion orders were still necessary. The independent reviewer reported that they were no longer necessary, and his successor has said the same. That is why the position is different today.

It is not hard to see the reason. The section of the Act which provides for exclusion orders says that they can be made either to prevent someone in Northern Ireland from entering Britain, or to prevent someone in Britain from entering Northern Ireland. No restriction on freedom is imposed on such people when they are in Northern Ireland, or in Britain. To make such an order, the Secretary of State must be satisfied—not merely have grounds, even reasonable grounds, for suspecting—that a person entering either Northern Ireland or Britain is a terrorist, or is about to engage in terrorism.

Self-evidently, the power has been subject to attack, for a very simple reason. Either someone is a terrorist, in which case he should be in detention, or he is not, in which case he should be able to move freely. If such a person is under suspicion, he should be under surveillance, whether in Northern Ireland or in Britain. That is precisely why the Government's own independent advisers have sought the abolition of the power.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Blair: Perhaps I may be allowed to finish.

I quote the words of someone who was never considered to be soft on terrorism—former Member of Parliament Enoch Powell—who said in February 1987:

"The inherent objectionableness of a power to exclude from one part of the United Kingdom into another is undiminished, but the evidence for utility continues to diminish. I hope that we shall see the end of it, certainly no later than the new edition of this Act, and preferably when we come to consider renewal in a year's time. An indication of that indeed came from the Home Secretary."

At that time, the Government were themselves saying that they could see the end of the exclusion powers. Mr. Powell continued:

"There is no reason why we should perpetuate this division of the United Kingdom into mutual exclusion zones. We should probably never have done this in 1974. It was probably based on misconception . . . The power is no longer welcome, certainly not in Northern Ireland."—[*Official Report*, 10 February 1987; Vol. 110, c. 277.]

Conservative Members may disagree with the point being made, but they can hardly say that it is so extreme that no reasonable person could ever contemplate it. Their own advisers support it, and even Unionist Members of Parliament believe that the powers have outlived their usefulness.

There are Members of Parliament, such as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), who are opposed to exclusion orders although they themselves suffer terrorist threats and abuse. If hon. Members will not listen to us when we tell them of the use to which their views are being put as propaganda for the IRA, at least let them listen to those who have to live with the threat of the IRA day in and day out.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Conservative Members do not like it either. No one wants the Act to come before the House. What the hon. Gentleman misunderstands about our position is that we also want to prevent terrorism. The whole point of what my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary was saying is that the power to issue exclusion orders was used only twice last year. The hon. Gentleman is right: there must be reasonable doubt. Until he sees that the purpose is prevention rather than punishment, the Labour party will not gain the respect it should for its so-called tough stand on crime.

Mr. Blair: That is the very question which fell to be considered. Does the advantage of the exclusion order, in the small number of cases to which it is applied, outweigh the disadvantages so well known to those who live and work in Northern Ireland? On balance, are those people better off or worse off? The independent advisers concluded that the disadvantages outweighed the advantages, and that is our conclusion, too. I am not saying that that conclusion is obvious, or that no reasonable person could reach a different view, but I ask the hon. Gentleman at least to accept that our objections are not being raised lightly or superficially. They are objections which can be sustained, even on the basis of the reports of the Government's own advisers.

Judicial intervention is the second ground of objection. This is perhaps the most important point that we can make. Under the criminal law, as set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, a suspect, whether it be a murderer, an armed robber, or a rapist, can be held for up to 36 hours. After that time, the suspect must be brought before the court. The court then has the power to detain further, prior to a charge being made.

Under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the initial period is 48 hours, not 36 hours. That is one difference. The principal difference, however, is that after 48 hours the Secretary of State is given the power to extend detention for up to another five days, making seven in all. The Prevention of Terrorism Act therefore allows an extension of detention not by the judiciary but by the Executive.

It must be accepted, as it was accepted when the power was introduced, that prima facie the power is offensive to the basic principle of the rule of law, which is that deprivation of liberty should be through the courts and not through politicians.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does the hon. Gentleman not accept that the preservation of life is an even more important principle, and that the precise reason why this power must lie with the Executive and not with the courts is because the information which leads the Executive to believe that the man is a terrorist is of a nature which cannot be given in open court on account of the danger to the lives of witnesses? Those extra five days give the police the opportunity to find information which can be used in court.

Mr. Blair: The hon. Gentleman has made two points. I shall deal in turn with each of them.

The hon. Gentleman said that these matters cannot be dealt with in open court. No one has ever suggested that they should be dealt with in open court. The courts have the power to sit in camera. That power would be used in such a situation. The hon. Gentleman also said—the Secretary of State says it, too, when he is being somewhat

economical with the truth in these matters—that after four days the extra period of detention is necessary or we may let out a terrorist. In other words, we may just about be putting our hands on the evidence that we are missing when the detention period ends and we have to let the terrorist out.

That is a misunderstanding of what has been said. Nobody suggests that we should abrogate the detention period. What is being said is that the decision whether it should be extended should be a judicial decision and not an Executive decision.

Mr. Brazier: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to come back on that point?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Blair: I will deal with the point, and then I will give way. The Home Secretary often gave way to me, so I will give way to him.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

Mr. Blair: Very well.

Mr. Kaufman: The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) talked about the efficacy of detention. Is my hon. Friend aware that, in the past 19 years, 7,192 people have been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, of whom precisely six have been convicted of crimes and given sentences of more than five years? Is he further aware that four of those were the Maguire family, who were found to have been wrongfully convicted? Far from this power being efficacious during that period, there have been 148 terrorist offences, 60 people have been killed, and the people for whom this legislation was driven through Parliament—the Birmingham pub bombers—are still at large after 19 years.

Mr. Blair: My right hon. Friend makes a point to which I had intended to turn: why it is so important that we should be vigilant about the way in which these powers are used. Given that the vast majority of people are not then charged with any offence, as Members of Parliament we should at least look at whether the powers that we are granting to the Executive are justified. Such a situation should be tolerated only if the powers can be proved to be absolutely necessary to secure evidence against terrorists.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman does not agree with his right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who was nodding vigorously a few moments ago. He said that the Act should never have been passed in the first place. He plainly misunderstands the purpose of the Act, which is to prevent terrorism, not to give rise to convictions. The point is not to wait until the bomb has gone off and then try to convict somebody afterwards. The point is to prevent them from committing an act of terrorism in the first place.

Presumably the hon. Gentleman is aware of the passages in Lord Colville's current report about why these issues are not justiciable, if I may use that technical phase. It is right that when I exercise Executive powers they should be subject to judicial supervision. That is what Lord Colville is for: he finds that the powers are being exercised properly; he recommends their renewal.

The hon. Gentleman is really burnt up with civil liberties issues. Is he saying that I am not exercising the powers properly? Can he look across at me with a straight face and say that he believes that people's civil liberties are being damaged? The powers are used against someone only when I am satisfied—and I insist that I should be satisfied—that there is a serious public interest involved in using them. Frankly, the hon. Gentleman is irresponsible in engaging in debating games with his right hon. Friend and others to try to justify voting against the powers at the end of the debate.

Mr. Blair: I did not notice any refutation by the Home Secretary of the point that I was making. He says that I am becoming burnt up about civil liberties. These are serious powers. They are virtually unique in the western world. I hope that no hon. Member will say that we do not have the right to challenge powers to make sure that they are in accordance with the civil liberties of our country.

The Home Secretary says that he is satisfied that the powers are being used reasonably. If the fact that the Executive had said that they were using such powers properly was enough for any House of Commons, it would mean that we had given up the right that we have always had to separate the powers of the judiciary and of the Executive.

The purpose of judicial intervention—which the Home Secretary appears, with all due respect, not even to understand—is to make sure that the powers of detention, extraordinary as they are, are exercised in a proper way. It is not good enough to say that the Home Secretary will exercise them in a proper way, because the very principle of the rule of law is that that decision should be made by a court, not by a politician.

Mr. Clarke: This important point seems to be the key to the hon. Gentleman's concern. I am sure that he accepts that I believe in civil liberties just as much as he does. However, I do not ask either the hon. Gentleman or the House just to accept my assertion that my use of the powers is consistent with our common view of civil liberties. I am subject to judicial supervision. That is what Lord Colville is for. *[Interruption.]* Lord Colville is not a High Court judge. I believe that he sits as a recorder. He exercises a judicial style of review. He says, on supervision, that I exercise my powers properly.

Does the hon. Gentleman disbelieve Lord Colville? Does he have any ground for asserting that Lord Colville is wrong? Does he have any ground for asserting that I am not using the powers consistently with civil liberties? Or is he, as I insist, desperately casting about for reasons to vote against the use of powers which he knows are necessary and which he also knows perfectly well are exercised properly and with discretion by the Executive?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. There have been a number of interventions, to which, of course, I have no objection, but they are getting longer and longer.

Mr. Blair: I shall try to make my answer short.

That is an extraordinary thing for the Home Secretary to say. Lord Colville was appointed by the Government. He does not sit in a judicial capacity. It is not that he is biased, any more than anyone else is biased, but surely the Home Secretary, of all people, can tell the difference between an adviser appointed by the Government or a

[Mr. Blair]

member of the Cabinet and a member of the judiciary. That is at the very heart of and is the basis for the British rule of law.

It is extraordinary that the Home Secretary should say that an adviser to the Government—*[Interruption.]* I can agree or disagree, but to say that having a judge consider a provision is the same as having a Cabinet Minister consider a particular case is utterly absurd.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Blair: Just a moment.

That is, of course, why the European Court of Human Rights found against the Government. It found against the Government not because of some technicality or legalism, but because the notion that one should be detained by Executive power rather than by order of the court is contrary to the provisions of the convention on human rights. If the right hon. and learned Gentleman cannot understand that, he cannot understand the basis of British law.

Mr. Clarke: I shall make a short intervention, Madam Deputy Speaker. Lord Colville advises that I am using the powers properly. Does the hon. Gentleman agree or disagree with that? He skipped over that suggestion. If he does not agree, why not?

Mr. Blair: I have no means of knowing whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman is using the powers properly or not. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Of course I have not. The issue is not whether he is using his powers correctly. We passed the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 so that, after 36 hours, a person should be brought before a judge. We did not say that he should be brought before a civil servant or a politician but a judge. Let me educate Conservative Members. It is important that the power is vested in a court because in this country we believe that powers of detention should be exercised by courts, not by politicians, civil servants or parts of the Executive.

As a result of the decision of the European Court of Human Rights, the IRA has been handed a massive propaganda weapon, which it uses. We have had to derogate from the convention, and our reputation abroad is attacked as a transgressor of human rights. All that could be avoided, and the fight against terrorism strengthened, if we were to comply with the ruling.

Listening to the Home Secretary, one would think that it was the most extraordinary proposition that a judge should be involved rather than the Secretary of State. When the European Court of Human Rights first made its decision, in the Brogan case, the right hon. and learned Gentleman's predecessor, now the Foreign Secretary, said that his preferred route was judicial intervention. In other words, the very suggestion that the right hon. and learned Gentleman today decries as an extraordinary breach of the necessary means to fight terrorism was proposed as the preferred route by the current Foreign Secretary.

Conservative Members may disagree with our proposals, but to claim that the suggestion that someone who is detained should have the right to go before a judge rather than a politician is an outrageous breach of what we need to fight terrorism stands sense, reason and decency on its head. To describe that position as soft on terrorism and to decry it as giving succour to terrorists says far more about the desperation of the Conservative party than about the fight against terrorism.

All hon. Members abhor terrorism. Everyone believes that we must act against it with all the powers we have. Of course that might involve measures which restrict civil liberty in a way which may otherwise be repugnant. However, if we go beyond what is necessary to combat terrorism effectively, if we cravenly accept that any Act introduced by the Government and entitled "Prevention of Terrorism Act" must be supported in its entirety without question, and if we adopt the attitude that anyone who dares to question it is a closet supporter of terrorism, we do not strengthen the fight against terrorism: we weaken it.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is too much noise. Hon. Members know that, if the hon. Member who has the floor does not give way, they must resume their seats.

Mr. Blair: I am not giving way, because we need to make progress—*[Interruption.]*

Conservative Members who are barracking now should read reports of earlier debates on the issue. Some Conservative Members who are not in the Chamber—the present Leader of the House, for example—spoke of their distaste for the renewal of the provisions. I fully accept that they supported the provisions, but they were at least prepared to consider the case against them.

There is something very distasteful about Conservative Members' refusal today even to listen to the points being made. Since the exclusion orders were denounced by the Government's own advisers, and in view of the fact that a judicial intervention power was accepted by earlier Home Secretaries as not inhibiting the work of the security services, nothing that we are proposing would inhibit the security services or the police in the fight against terrorism. Nothing in our proposals would mean that recent arrests or fines would have been hindered. Suggestions to the contrary are merely crude propaganda of the most unworthy kind.

Let us be clear. The reason why the Government refuse even to talk to us about the legislation, despite the fact that our suggestions are being supported by their advisers and were previously contemplated by them, is that crime is doubling. The Government are losing the debate on law and order. They would prefer to disagree for the sake of the Tory party than agree for the sake of the country.

What we are asking the Government to do would in no way hinder the fight against terrorism. Indeed, it would allow us to present our case in the courts of the world with much greater conviction. I urge the Government even now to take the partisan nature of their debating out of the issue, to unite our parties, the House and the country in defence of our democracy and not to play politics with the issue.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next hon. Member to speak, I remind the House of what Madam Speaker said earlier. Many hon. Members are anxious to participate, but there is not a great deal of time, so could speeches please be kept as short as possible?

5.47 pm

Sir John Wheeler (Westminster, North): I shall try to abide by your wishes, Madam Deputy Speaker, and be brief.

I agree to a certain extent with the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). The annual debate on the renewal of the Act is very serious and important. No hon. Member, regardless of the party to which he belongs, willingly or easily agrees to the curtailment of liberty or a change in the normal procedures for the management of the criminal justice system. To that extent, I agree with him. Unlike him, however, I shall vote to renew the order tonight.

The cat leaped out of the bag when the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) said that he was opposed to the whole concept of the Act, as he is entitled to be. It became clear that the Labour party is divided on the issue. That is the difficulty facing the hon. Member for Sedgefield.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Wheeler: I shall not give way, because I intend to be brief.

The difficulty faced by the hon. Member for Sedgefield is that he does not have a united party and policy behind him.

We have been debating for some time but, so far, we have not mentioned the victims of terrorism. On the Treasury Bench today I see the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office—my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates)—and the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. They have the awesome, gruesome task of appearing before the people of Northern Ireland week after week when an outrage has occurred. We know from the television news at the weekend and over the past few days how dreadful those outrages have been. My hon. Friends have to explain to the public exactly what the Government and the security forces are doing. We know of the horrors inflicted on ordinary people and their families. People are injured, maimed and killed; people have to suffer the consequences of that horror for the rest of their lives.

It behoves us to tackle the problem in the House, and to think about the victims as well as the arguments about civil liberties and the intervention of the criminal justice system.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Sir John Wheeler: I intend to be fair, I want to be brief, and I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, so I shall continue, if my hon. Friend will allow me.

I feel able to support the renewal of the Act because I too have read the independent report of my noble and learned Friend Viscount Colville. I have it before me now. Lord Colville is a distinguished member of the Bar, a distinguished Queen's counsel. In his statement to the Secretary of State on 10 February, he said:

> "The Act ought, I recommend, to continue in force in its entirety for another twelve months".

He did not say, "Some part of the Act should be excluded from renewal"; he said, "in its entirety".

Lord Colville reviewed the operation of the Act in various ways. His report to the Home Secretary refers to exclusion orders, which have been the subject of considerable debate. Exclusion orders are now being used less and less. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary made only two exclusion orders in 1992, one of which was in respect of a man at the end of a 24-year prison sentence. The House may divine from the latter information that there were real reasons why my right hon. and learned Friend made the order relating to that individual. Twenty-one other orders were renewed.

Examining the operation of those procedures, Lord Colville said:

> "The machinery is working effectively. The police themselves initiate the process, when orders are due to expire".

My right hon. and learned Friend has to examine carefully a detailed brief before he agrees to the exclusion order.

By far the most important part of the Act, and the reason why we should renew it tonight, is the power to detain people while inquiries are being made. The public outside the House and the people listening to the debate would be astounded if, in the present circumstances, the House of Commons were to say that we would handicap the police in the course of their investigations. It is only fair and right that the police should have reasonably granted powers, because in the course of their inquiries they have to use forensic services, which require time—not merely hours but sometimes two, three or more days—especially when guns and explosives are the subject of the investigations. To deny the police the use of that time would be criminal in itself, and entirely wrong. The power should continue.

It is said that the decision should be transferred from the Secretary of State to a High Court judge. However, when I was a magistrate and had to consider whether to grant or withhold bail, I sat in an administrative capacity, not in a judicial capacity in which I would have been deciding the guilt or innocence of an individual. I was deciding, on the balance of the information presented to me, whether I should allow a person freedom on bail or withhold his liberty. Precisely the same process is in play when considering whether to detain someone under the Act.

One of the key factors in the decision is time. The Home Secretary must make the decision rapidly. As the House knows, such events occur dramatically and suddenly, when the police make an arrest and require further time for forensic and other inquiries, or wish to apprehend other potential suspects. They require an immediate decision from my right hon. and learned Friend. I see no advantage to the cause of civil liberty in transferring that burden and obligation from the Home Secretary's desk to the desk of a High Court judge.

I have heard references to the practices of continental Europe, but when I examine the administrative procedures of France or Germany, to my horror I discover that people can be detained without trial not only for weeks but often for months. We in this country would not find that tolerable, so I see no comfort in looking to the procedures of continental Europe for a comparison with our decision on the procedures in the Act.

I have consulted the police. They do a difficult and dangerous job on behalf of the public in the United Kingdom. We ought to be grateful to them for the work they do in trying to prevent and contain terrorism. The police are successful, and they believe that they should be given the powers. They do not especially welcome such

[Sir John Wheeler]

powers. They prefer to operate not exceptionally but within the curtilage of the normal criminal justice process, but they are firmly of the opinion that for the time being the powers should be retained.

The House does not have to agree simply because the police say so, but we certainly ought to listen to the voices of the people in the front line of the investigation and containment of terrorism.

For those practical reasons, I shall vote for renewal of the Act. I shall not do so lightly. I agree with the hon. Member for Sedgefield that this is a serious matter. It is indeed right that we should pause and ask whether it is really necessary to continue with the Act. I reluctantly come to the conclusion that, for the time being, we should, so I urge my hon. Friends and all other hon. Members to agree to the renewal of the Act for a further 12 months, as was recommended independently by Lord Colville.

5.58 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I begin by agreeing with a least two things that the Home Secretary said. First, in reply to an intervention, he said that terrorism in Northern Ireland was becoming less and less political and more and more a feature of gangsterism. The more often that we can say that, the better it will be for all parties involved. I have no doubt that it is true.

Mr. Mallon: I apologise for asking the right hon. Gentleman to give way immediately, but what he has said is entirely wrong. We under-estimate terrorism if we look upon it as gangsterism. Every murder committed by paramilitary groups is a political murder for a political purpose. We under-estimate what we are dealing with if we regard it simply as gangsterism.

Mr. Hattersley: Because of my respect for the hon. Gentleman, I am glad that I gave way to him in order to allow him to register his disagreement—but I believe that he will probably agree more with the rest of what I say.

I congratulate the Home Secretary on his decision to toughen the regulations governing terrorist finances, and to make the law in England more comparable with that which already exists in Northern Ireland, I urged his predecessor to do that last year, when the order was renewed, and I urged him to do so the year before. On both occasions, he swept aside the idea with something approaching disdain.

I suppose that I could then have toured the country saying that the Government were soft on terrorist finance, but that did not seem to me to be an especially grown-up way to behave. I do not believe that it is especially grown-up for the Home Secretary to have produced a mirror image of such behaviour when we advanced rational arguments.

The Home Secretary has the habit of saying the first thing that comes into his head and hoping that, if he is sufficiently emphatic, people will believe it. Several times he challenged my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) to say whether he agreed with Lord Colville's judgment that he, the Home Secretary, had behaved properly under the order. Lord Colville says no such thing. He says that the Home Secretary has observed the terms of the Act and that he has applied the criteria as set down in the legislation. Our entire argument is that the criteria are wrong and that the terms of the legislation need to be changed. The idea that Lord Colville has endorsed everything that the Home Secretary has done in principle and in practice during his 11 months in office is simply wrong.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield on the quality of his speech and on his proposal for all-party talks in the hope that there could be a consensus on how to deal with terrorism. All-party agreement would be very much better on this matter, but it cannot come about as a result of the Government stating what they want and expecting everyone else to fall into line. Before this Parliament is over, the Government will discover that Governments with small majorities cannot behave in that way. They will discover that, if they want some co-operation, they must offer some co-operation to other parties.

I have no doubt that it would have been very much better if that had been done today, although I am not surprised that it has not been. The Government prefer to posture as the only true enemy of terrorism rather than pursue the rational course and deal with the provisions on their merits. I shall attempt to do that in one limited area. Because of the limitation of time, I shall not speak about exclusion orders, of which I very much disapprove.

I shall talk about no aspects of the provisions except the powers of detention and extended detention under the Act. I shall at once make my position on the history of the Act clear. I was opposed to it when it was introduced. I was involved in its conception because five of my constituents were killed in the Birmingham pub bombing. With the then Home Secretary, I went to Birmingham in the early hours of the day following that atrocity. Then, and subsequently, I was opposed to the Act.

During the past 14 or 15 years, I have sometimes been convinced that some special powers are needed to deal with terrorism. In my case, that has been a move in a more authoritarian direction rather than the reverse. As I now believe that some special powers may be necessary, all I shall do is consider what those powers should be and how they should be administered.

We have to begin with the question of the purpose of section 14. From time to time—I have spoken in many of these debates over the past 10 years—different arguments have been advanced about why section 14 is needed. On one occasion, the Minister of State, Home Office, who is now, incredibly, the Secretary of State for Education, asked me to understand that it was necessary because men with guns and explosives had been found in the garden of the Secretary of State for Defence. I offered the view that if someone with guns and explosives was found in my garden, I should expect him to be arrested and prosecuted whether there was a Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act or not.

Two years later, the then Minister of State gave the explanation that the Home Secretary has given today—that it is necessary to arrest persons who have not committed a crime but who are assumed to be likely to commit crimes or to co-operate in the commission of crimes. Even as one describes that proposal, one realises how anti-libertarian it is. Men who, on the Home Secretary's criteria, have done nothing for which they can be prosecuted must necessarily be arrested in the belief that they may in some way that the Home Office and the police

cannot describe be involved in the future commission of a crime. One may have to take such action, but one must be very careful about the procedure by which it is carried out.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I see the Home Secretary rising. I give way to him, but because of time, I shall not give way again.

Mr. Clarke: I give a short example. Under the Act, a request may be made to the Secretary of State for an extension of detention beyond 48 hours to allow investigations to continue. I have known of cases in which, after the extension has been given, the suspect has started to answer questions when interviewed by the police although he has refused to do so before. That can lead to the discovery of equipment, the discovery of weapons and the interception of other people who are still pursuing the criminal conspiracy.

In many such cases, sufficient evidence will never emerge against the person detained to lead to that person being charged with an offence. It may happen that the offence contemplated never occurs, because we have had exceptional powers to deal with terrorism. It is important that a distinction is made between the worst terrorist cases and the ordinary operation of the law. I have given an example of how the extra detention can lead to the frustration of terrorist acts, although not necessarily to anyone being charged. That is a perfectly proper exercise of my role in the protection of the public against terrorism.

Mr. Hattersley: The examples that Lord Colville gives in his report are very different from those that the Home Secretary asks us to examine. The examples given by Lord Colville might well occur in normal criminal prosecutions. A man shoots at a car and the driver is injured, but not killed. A man is apprehended and it takes more than three days to carry out the necessary forensic tests. Such a problem can arise in a shooting that does not have a terrorist connotation. All Lord Colville's examples in the report are very different from those that the Home Secretary has used in his attempt to convince us today.

I am prepared to believe that there may be occasions on which the extension is needed. The question is how the extension should be carried out against the background of what results from detention and its extension. Lord Colville's report tells us that, in 1990, 193 men and women were detained. Only 28 were charged and only six of them were charged with terrorist offences. In 1991, 153 men and women were detained and only four were charged. Last year, 126 men and women were detained and 30 were charged. That means that, although many people are held under these powers, at the end of the interrogation, which the Home Secretary has told us is likely to be so effective because it is prolonged, only one quarter at best are charged with any criminal offences.

The Home Secretary cannot take lightly the idea that numbers of men and women are held for 36 hours, for 48 hours or for seven days in police custody and then turned out without any charge being brought against them.

The suspicion that has always run through these debates is that men and women have been held under this power not because it was anticipated that they would be charged, but because it was thought that they would provide information. On one occasion, the then Home Secretary, Sir Leon Brittan, admitted that that was a proper use of the Act. The Home Secretary now says that it is a proper use of the Act.

Mr. Clarke: No.

Mr. Hattersley: I shall give way in a moment.

The Home Secretary must remember that using the Act to trawl for information was a purpose of the Act which his Government specifically recanted when they went to the European Court of Justice. Sir Leon Brittan was disowned at the court. The Home Secretary's immediate predecessor said last year and the year before that the Act was never used for that purpose. If the Home Secretary wants to tell me now that it is, I shall give way.

Mr. Clarke: This is the point that I tried to make at the beginning of my speech. The Act exists to assist the prevention and investigation of terrorism. How many of those detained were charged is not a measure of its success. Of course it is important that people are not detained at whim and that we do not go on fishing expeditions. I have to be satisfied that there is a good and substantial reason for the individual to be detained. It is no good saying afterwards, "You may have recovered 10 tonnes of Semtex, but you have not been able to bring a charge against the person you detained." I regard it as a successful use of the Act if we have got the tonnes of Semtex even if nobody can be charged, because what was intended as a major terrorist outrage never actually took place, thanks to the use of the powers under the Act.

Mr. Hattersley: If the Home Secretary is making a second change of attitude and saying that the powers are being used for what I believe his profession calls fishing expeditions, the queue at the European Court will be a mile long, since the last judgment against the Government was minimised because the Government's representative was explicit in saying that the powers were not used for that purpose.

I say without hesitation that I am opposed to the arrest of men and women against whom no charge is likely or possible simply in order to obtain information from them. That is not consistent with the rule of law in a free society. Men and women who are deprived of their liberty by being held temporarily in custody—"temporarily" meaning seven days in this context—ought only to be men and women against whom a charge is at least possible, whether or not it is likely. Now that the Home Secretary has changed his attitude and has admitted that the Act is being used for this purpose, I believe that we will return to the subject time after time.

One reason why I want to see judicial intervention is that I do not believe that the Act would be used for fishing expeditions were that a feature of its operation. I now begin to understand one reason why the Government do not want judicial intervention; it would be difficult for them to say to a judge, "We have not got anything against this man but we want to hold him in peculiar circumstances under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act in the hope that we may obtain information from him."

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: Mr. Deputy Speaker asked us to be brief. I have given way twice already. On both occasions the Home Secretary's interventions were almost as long as my speech.

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I have not given way yet. The Home Secretary must learn how the House operates. I will give way to the Home Secretary on the understanding that on this occasion he will be brief. Is that agreed?

Mr. Clarke *rose*——

Mr. Hattersley: I have not given way to him yet. If he will be brief, I will give way to him. Is that agreed?

Mr. Clarke: Yes, I will be brief. The right hon. Gentleman obviously misheard me a moment ago. I said that we do not use the powers for fishing expeditions. We detain people only when we are satisfied that there is sufficient evidence or information to justify keeping them, but it is a successful use of the powers to prevent and investigate terrorism. It is not an accurate test to say that the person should necessarily be charged at the end. Great success may be achieved without the charging of the person properly detained.

Mr. Hattersley: Now that the Home Secretary and I have developed a proper relationship across the Floor of the House, let me say to him that if that was what he meant, it was not what he said. If it was what he intended to say, it is not consistent with the figures. The figures make it clear that only a tiny proportion of the men and women who are held are charged. That can only mean that what the Home Secretary appeared to say a moment ago is fact.

I want to pursue the crucial and central question of judicial intervention, but before that I want to make one other point clear. Over the past five years, I have taken part in innumerable radio and television programmes about men and women who have been wrongfully convicted. Inevitably the Home Office Minister who appeared with me said that there was nothing to worry about because those men and women had been convicted before the passing of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which meant that such a catastrophe could never occur again.

The Home Secretary must understand, as Lord Colville makes clear in this year's report, that were any of those people, who were so cruelly mistreated by the misapplication of the law and wrongful conviction, brought to court again, they would not have the full protection of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act; they would have the protection of that Act as modified by the prevention of terrorism Act. They would not get access to their solicitor at the same time as a man or woman who was charged under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. When I hear the Home Secretary say that, if people are kept in a long time, and if they know that their detention has been extended, they are more likely to talk, the overtones of the Birmingham pub bombing and of the Maguire case ring clearly round the Chamber. *[Interruption.]* That is what the Home Secretary said, as the record tomorrow will show clearly. He is dealing lightly with the fundamental concept of civil liberty which he, perhaps more than any other Minister, ought to preserve.

Many or perhaps all of the problems could be overcome if the Government would agree to a judge taking the decision on the extension of the detention order. That is necessary in principle because it is wrong in our sort of democracy that a Minister should have the right to imprison a man or woman for seven days. It does not matter how assiduous the Minister is in reading the papers, or whether he is a genuine or a bogus libertarian; it does not even matter if he is an ex-libertarian who is ambitious for high office. It is wrong in principle that a politician should be enabled to keep a man or woman in custody for seven days.

My fears, which the Home Secretary says are groundless, about fishing expeditions or people being likely to talk when they are locked up for a long time are much more likely to be avoided if at some point evidence is presented to a judge explaining why that man or woman is there. The explanation might even be that described by the Home Secretary in his third interpretation of what he said first. Whatever the reason, it could be put to a judge, who would make the judgment.

It has been said that, by giving the information to a judge, one would be risking further crimes being committed. I trust judges enough to believe that they could be given such information in camera and it would remain secure. That is all we are asking for. If that happened, many of our fears would be removed. We would no longer be at variance with the European Court of Human Rights and we would no longer have to have the derogation from section 5 of the document to which we are a party.

The Home Secretary seems to think that what Lord Colville said last year or the year before he no longer believes unless he issues an official confirmation. I assure the Home Secretary that if he reads all Lord Colville's reports he will find that three years ago Lord Colville said that a bold new initiative was necessary to replace the extension of detention order. He said that that initiative should be based on the Scottish or Isle of Man methodology. "Methodology" is not a word of my invention or of common use, but that is what Lord Colville said and that is what the Government should do.

I conclude by telling the Home Secretary what I thought he knew: his immediate predecessor but two, the present Foreign Secretary, told me that that was the scheme which he would like to see in operation. I saw the right hon. Gentleman the Foreign Secretary at the time we were arraigned before the European Court. I asked him whether we could conform to European practice by having a judge decide the necessity for the extended detention. There was no secret about it; the then Home Secretary told me that that was his preferred solution but that the judiciary would not have it. There was speculation between us as to why that was so. I came to the conclusion that the judiciary would have it if the House passed a law because, if the obligation was placed on them by Parliament, they would fulfil it.

When our argument provokes from the Home Secretary the response that we are pandering to terrorism, that is the most pathetically second-rate reaction imaginable, even from the right hon. and learned Gentleman. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Right hon. and hon. Members on the Front Benches are just as much subject to the discipline of the Chair as any other hon. Member. I will not allow cross-party conversations.

Mr. Hattersley: Perhaps this comes as news to the Home Secretary, but at the meeting of the general council of the Bar in the summer, I discussed the matter with the Attorney-General and other barristers. We all knew that a

past Home Secretary wanted that solution and there was discussion about whether the judges were right to reject it. I say only this to the Home Secretary. Some of us who believe that the fight against terrorism will be won only if the Government abide by the rule and the spirit of the law will go on arguing the case made so well by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield.

It is not because we are soft on terrorism but because we are rational about it. Terrorism will not be defeated by a party which has a political advantage or has some sort of primeval reflex rather than thinking about the real methods of bringing terrorism to an end.

6.19 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): A sense of deja vu returns as we canter through our annual debate, with many familiar faces from previous years and at least a hint of some of the speeches from previous years.

The essence of the debate is how to perform the balancing act between a proactive response to terrorism and safeguarding civil liberties. A delicate balancing act must be performed. I do not for one moment challenge the sincerity of Labour Members when they pronounce their determination to see terrorism effectively combated. My argument is with the means to achieve that.

Listening carefully to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) this afternoon, I had difficulty not so much with the points that he made, which are valid and worthy of debate, as with the fact that I cannot see that the distance between his point of view and that which is contained in the Act is sufficiently great to justify his party in not voting for the order. In other words, I feel that the hon. Gentleman would prefer the provisions to be in place rather than having no provisions at all, which is surely the implication of his voting against them.

To be brief because we are short of time, I wish simply to select three points from the report itself. Arguably, the report has received little attention in this debate. First, I refer to page 4 and the section on exclusions. I have certainly learnt something from the Home Secretary today about Lord Colville's attitude on exclusions which I did not previously realise. I was under the impression that Lord Colville had historic doubts about exclusion.

I specifically notice that, in paragraph 4, Lord Colville refers to the instance of a citizen of the Republic of Ireland being the subject of an exclusion order and being deported to Northern Ireland. I believe that it is the first time that that has happened. That raises serious questions and must be examined. Should not restrictions placed on deportation against a citizen of the Republic of Ireland be examined more carefully?

The second point relates to the comments on the statistics. Lord Colville acknowledges that we must be wary of percentages as an indication of the success or otherwise of the measures. Trends reflect more the level of terrorism than the effectiveness of the measures. I entirely endorse the conclusion that Prevention of Terrorism Act powers are a deterrent, the effectiveness of which it is impossible to prove. Although the effectiveness of the powers is impossible to prove, they are essential.

I am anxious to be brief. My final point relates to my concern about section 5 and the financing of terrorism. If I understood my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary correctly, he puts a different interpretation on the situation from Lord Colville's. Lord Colville refers to section 13 and schedules 4 and 7 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act. He acknowledges that the complexities are great but says:

"so far there have been no prosecutions nor money confiscated."

That is an alarming state of affairs. I therefore fully endorse the suggestion that the Criminal Justice Bill, which is now before the House of Lords, should be examined thoroughly to see whether more effective measures are needed.

On page 19, Lord Colville raises another issue:

"the extent to which the PTA is able to catch fund raising in the UK which is intended to provide for internecine conflicts overseas."

That is a subject which we have debated previously. Certainly, in the past I should have liked to see organisations of other countries prosecuted for their activities in London, but successive Home Secretaries have seen the dangers of that and I wonder whether we should tread more carefully than Lord Colville suggests. It may be difficult to take action against other countries' organisations; after all, today's freedom fighter could be tomorrow's terrorist.

My essential point is that I have no qualms or hesitations about these provisions. It is essential that they be renewed and I look forward to that.

6.25 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I shall try to be as brief as possible in the present circumstances. I begin by thanking Lord Colville for his report. The frequency of quotations by both sides of the House from Colville past and present is eloquent testimony to the value of his report.

Lord Colville makes the point that the only thing that we can do today is renew the Act or not. We cannot make proposals for change, although in such debates we take the opportunity to air matters which we hope that the Home Office will take on board for future reviews. There is a pressing need for some decent parliamentary scrutiny of this issue. Clearly, this kind of annual debate is inadequate, and today's will be more inadequate than usual due to the lack of time. It is time for proper thought to be given to proper parliamentary scrutiny of these matters on a more continuous basis.

I find myself in the curious position of supporting the renewal of the legislation, although I have considerable sympathy with the two ranges of objections made by the Labour party. The hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) quoted the comments of the former Member for South Down, Mr. Enoch Powell, in 1987. We stand for those comments completely; we still do not like exclusion orders, and we believe that the practice should be discountined because it is fundamentally wrong.

The hon. Gentleman's second range of objections referred to the detention power and what we call the Brogan point. I regard the Brogan point as more of a technicality. The substance of the matter is that persons being detained and questioned are treated much better in the United Kingdom than on the continent. Reference has been made to the way in which persons can be detained on the continent for months on end. It is a problem of a different legal culture and the custom of having a juge d'instruction in the continental system.

Because of the propaganda point involved and because it involves our derogating on this small point, I wish that

[Mr. David Trimble]

the Home Office would examine the issue more closely. I agree that a High Court judge cannot be involved because he would be involved in any subsequent trial, which completely rules him out. Nor could the job be given to magistrates because of the uneven quality of the magistracy—I say no more on that.

As Lord Colville said, we must look to the practice in Scotland with the procurator fiscal and the practice in the Channel Islands. We must also look at what was recommended in Northern Ireland in 1971 by the MacDermott report—that something equivalent to the juge d'instruction should be introduced. It would not need to be introduced for all cases; it could be introduced for these cases only.

The Brogan case did not require matters to be brought before a court. It used the term "judicial officer". A judicial officer could be created for the purpose of approving extensions. The same person could do the job currently done by Sir Louis Blom Cooper and his deputies with regard to supervising detention. That would be a more favourable way of doing it.

None the less, those matters are technicalities and are not sufficient grounds for voting against the legislation as a whole. I hope that the Labour party will continue to reconsider the matter. There is a change of tone, certainly between last year and this year: the Labour party has reduced its objections from three in 1992 to two in 1993. I hope that that trend will continue and that the Labour party will adopt a more sensible position. Labour Members have put on record their objections to the technicalities, but one way of showing that they are concerned simply with those particular aspects and are not opposed to the fight against terrorism generally is by declining to divide the House later this evening. That would be a fair and balanced way of doing it.

I am glad that the Home Secretary has accepted Lord Colville's suggestion to table amendments to the financial aspects of the Criminal Justice Bill. Financial powers need to be strengthened—even those in the emergency provisions are not working particularly successfully. The Home Secretary should take on board the relationship between financing terrorism and drugs. Terrorist organisations are deeply involved with drugs, and legislation to combat that problem is not very effective. It should be more effective on both counts.

The Home Secretary should also address the issue raised on page 17 of the report in relation to conspiracy offences. I am not sure whether the present Criminal Justice Bill does so. If it does not, will the Home Secretary ensure that it does?

As I have said on previous occasions, there is a need for a coherent United Kingdom provision on terrorism. We have a patchwork of overlapping provisions which operate as a code. The legislation is vital for the police and the Army in Northern Ireland as it is their chief arresting power. We need a more coherent provision.

I shall not explore the subject of the present structures operating in Great Britain as it comes under the Sheehy inquiry. Thought must be given to the structure and approach in Great Britain. The Home Secretary referred to the way in which the security service—MI5—has been brought in. I am not reassured by that, as MI5 has been involved in Northern Ireland, where it has not covered itself in glory, and I am not sure that it would do so here. We are discussing something which is fundamentally a police matter and should be treated as such. I do not think that bringing in overlapping agencies is the right solution. It may ultimately be correct to consider having a Great Britain or United Kingdom equivalent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation or some such organisation, but bringing in the security forces is not a good idea.

Like the Home Secretary, I congratulate the police on the recent finds of explosives in London. I wish that the Home Secretary could say whether the explosives were home-grown or imported. Today's edition of the *Evening Standard* estimates that 10 tonnes of explosive material have been found in England since December. The well-informed security correspondent of *The Irish Times* —no snide comment intended—estimates that more than 20 tonnes of explosives were manufactured in Great Britain last year by the IRA.

The public should be made aware of that, alerted and told what to look for. Such matters cannot be dealt with in a hole-and-corner manner. The best assistance that we can have in defeating terrorism is the whole-hearted support of the people—and if we receive it, we should not call it collusion.

As other hon. Members have said, the provisions have been on the statute book for many years. Some people wrongly regard that as a reason for dispensing with them. I turn the argument around and say that the Government should think carefully and ask themselves why they have not yet succeeded. What have they been doing for the past 20 years to cause their failure? What should they be doing that they have not done for their past 20 years?

It is time to give serious consideration, not just to the security measures, but to the political context in which they operate. Mistakes have been made, and a mistaken approach adopted, over the past 20 years. It is time to give fresh thought to such fundamental matters. We hope that such action will result in not having to hold debates such as today's year after year.

6.34 pm

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), whose experience and bravery—and that of his colleagues from all the parties in Northern Ireland—are well recognised in the House. We pay tribute to them. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues will know that the fear and practice of terrorism occurs not only in Ulster, some of our major regional cities, our capital city in England, but in my constituency of Shrewsbury. In August, the IRA bombed many shops in Shrewsbury and caused considerable destruction at Shrewsbury castle and the regimental museum. However, the IRA has not won, as the people of Shrewsbury and Shropshire are determined to ensure that the regimental museum is rebuilt, despite the best endeavours of the terrorists.

It is right that the House should place on record its congratulations to the police on their alertness in making the discovery that was announced today. It should also congratulate them on the many other occasions when they have done a superb job in preventing acts of terrorism, not just sought to bring to justice those who have committed such acts. The purpose of today's debate—albeit a brief debate—is to talk about prevention, not exclusively what happens afterwards. Our police and the security forces

have not only one of the most dangerous jobs, but are best equipped and trained to carry it out. Regrettably, they are also the most experienced people in Europe in dealing with the problem.

Is terrorism in decline? I do not think that anyone believes that that is true. How best can we help the security forces to fight on the community's behalf? This afternoon, Labour Members, including the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley)—who made a speech more than 20 minutes long—have done nothing but wriggle. The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1976 passed through Parliament only with the support of the then Conservative Opposition, who were not prepared to make partisan political points on an issue as important as the prevention of terrorism. It was ironic that the then Labour Government could get the Bill through the House of Commons only with Tory support, as 35 Labour Members opposed the measure.

The nub of the difficulty for the Opposition during the past 10 years has been that, since 1982, they have opposed the renewal of the Act every year except 1989, when the then Leader of the Opposition decided that it was time for positive leadership and ordered a three-line Whip for Members to abstain. Even then, 45 Labour Members voted against the Bill and against their leadership. Some of those Members now sit on the Labour party's Front Bench.

In 1987 the Labour party did not even mention prevention of terrorism in its manifesto, which shows the extent of its commitment to tackling the problem. In the Chamber today we have heard only empty rhetoric, which is a great pity. I have time and respect for the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). I fought his constituency in 1974 and know the district he represents. I believe him to be an honourable man, but if he wants the general public or the House to believe that he is serious about crime, his performance this afternoon will not convince them.

The Labour party has been wriggling about the exclusion orders, two of which were imposed throughout 1992. If a Martian landed on Earth and listened to today's debate, it would think that the Home Secretary was authorising the order to be used on thousands of people, but only two such orders were made in 12 months. The Labour party has advanced its whingeing civil liberties without a reference to the civil liberties of those people who have been bombed, injured and killed.

As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, exclusion orders are used for prevention, not punishment. My newly elevated right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) made an apposite reference to the magistrates' powers of bail. That is not a judgment, but a preventive action—and an executive, not judicial, one at that.

It is a great pity that the debate is not longer as we could have examined more closely why the Labour party is not prepared to support the order. It has tried to persuade us that its argument is based on civil liberty grounds. We believe that it wants to appease a minority—but significant number—of Labour party members who do not want the prevention of terrorism measure at any price. They would not want it if the Labour party were in government and they do not while the party is in opposition. They determine to fight terrorism with empty words, and are not serious in their fight. No Conservative Member wants the prevention of terrorism Act. The question is whether we need it, and Conservatives believe that we do.

We need strengthened intelligence—as mentioned by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. We need to back the police. Above all—however cheap the heckling—we need to try to bring the Labour Front-Bench team back to the realisation that terrorism cares not a damn for civil liberties. The terrorists care only for the succour that they will receive when Labour Members vote against the order in the Lobby tonight.

6.39 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Neither constraints of time nor inclination will persuade me to follow the line taken by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway), whose speech sits uneasily in the second half of the debate.

There must always be good and sound reasons for legislation of this nature. It inevitably places some categories of citizens in a less advantageous position than others. In truth, the legislation is discriminatory. Exclusion and detention detract from the civil rights of the citizen. The questions that we must answer are: whether the powers are justified and whether the price to be paid in terms of the freedom of a few is justified by the safety of the majority. Are we satisfied that, without the provisions, the police would be just as effective? It would be a confident Home Secretary who felt able to assert that these powers were not still necessary. Assertions that the powers are not necessary or that they should be diluted come rather more easily from those of us who do not have day-to-day responsibility for the terms of the legislation.

As I understand it, the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) opposes exclusion orders as a matter of principle. I understand and accept that, but, if the challenge to exclusion orders is that they are ineffective, one must remember that their principal purpose is deterrence. In the field of human behaviour, it is rarely possible to be satisfied that a deterrent has been effective. If the power of exclusion is removed, we shall certainly find out whether it is a deterrent, but finding out may be uncomfortable and unpleasant.

We have discussed judicial intervention in detention orders. I mean the Home Secretary no injustice when I say that he came to the view that, at least in relation to England and Wales, such intervention was determined by practicality. There is much to be said for an element of judicial intervention. The question for the Opposition is whether the absence of an element of judicial intervention at the moment is sufficient reason to vote against the continuance of the order, with the consequent public perception. The hon. Member for Sedgefield makes a good case, but we are not at the Chancery Bar: we are engaged in giving what is inevitably a signal to the people of the United Kingdom about the House's resolution to combat terrorism.

Mr. Blair: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I do not, because time is short.

If the hon. Member for Sedgefield were on the Treasury Bench, he would face the dilemma of a genuine concern for public safety, against which he would have to balance some of what has been said by his party before today and

[Mr. Campbell]

what he said in the debate. I rather fancy that, in that dilemma, the issue of public safety would prevail, and that would be perfectly understandable.

Mr. Blair *rose*——

Mr. Campbell: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman but I am anxious to make progress.

Mr. Blair: As the hon. and learned Gentleman has mentioned me several times, I think that I am entitled to intervene. Perhaps he will confirm that what I said about the judgment by the European Court of Human Rights was accepted by his predecessor in previous debates on this matter. Secondly, in no way would judicial intervention lessen public safety. I think that the hon. and learned Gentleman accepts that. However, it would mean that our law would be perceived to be fairer. In view of that, why does he urge me to change rather than urging change upon the Government, when he and his Front-Bench spokesmen used to agree with my position?

Mr. Campbell: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said about judicial intervention, he would have heard that there is much to be said for it. The question is whether it is legitimate today to vote against the continuation of the order because of an absence of judicial intervention, bearing in mind the public perception that will necessarily follow.

We should not vote for the continuance of the order because it will prevent terrorism or because it is a substitute for the due process of law, any more than we should vote for it because we think that that would give us some political advantage over other parties in the House. We should vote for it because it is a regrettable but necessary enhancement of police powers in an area in which the police need special assistance.

If all-party talks are offered or even discussed, they could proceed only upon unanimity of purpose in the House. Such unanimity would be best demonstrated by the order being approved without a Division.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North) *rose*——

Mr. Mallon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is with great reluctance that I make the point, and I imply nothing in relation to the Chair. It is ironic that the section of the community that is most affected by the order has not been able to put its point of view in the House. I shall leave it at that.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I shall deal with the first point of order. I fully appreciate what the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) says, but time is limited and there is nothing that the Chair can do about that.

Mr. McNamara: I would be more than happy to give two minutes to my hon. Friend to enable him to make his case so that both sides in Northern Ireland may be heard.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman. If he gave me more time, I would thank him very much.

Mr. McNamara: I am giving time.

6.45 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I have been allowed two minutes, but one gets used to such things when one is a member of a minority party. I shall have time to make just one point and will have to keep an eye on the clock.

This legislation has existed since 1974, and surely after so much time it merits re-examination. Such re-examination has been proposed, and it should come in the light of one question that I pose to the Government and the House. Despite the PTA and the whole battery of legislation, the number of troops that have been poured in, the £3 billion that have been thrown at the problem and the number of police and Army installations, why does terrorism continue in Northern Ireland? Despite internment, curfews and this legislation, why is it continuing?

The thesis that must be challenged is the one that says that the more troops and money and the more stringent the laws that are thrown at the problem, the more success, the more intelligence, the more arrests will result and terrorism will be defeated. That is patently erroneous. As the detection rates and the Secretary of State's figures show, the contrary is the case. The greater the intensity of security, as shown by this legislation, the more the community suffers. The more it suffers, the less hard intelligence is received by the security forces, and the terrorists laugh all the way to their next atrocity.

Let us not forget that the ideal context for the terrorist is the outward show of strength in the north of Ireland. The panoply of legislation is strangling the capacity of the security forces for detection. Those measures defeat their own purpose because communities are being held to ransom, mine more than any. That is why I am angry. That is why intelligence is not coming through. The methods are counter-productive, and by their use we have allowed the classic wasteland to develop. That is an ideal scenario for the terrorists to do as they do in places such as South Armagh. The result is that the detection rate goes down. We are approaching the issue in the wrong way. Let us have the courage to rethink.

I thank the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McMamara).

6.48 pm

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): I am obliged to my hon. Friend the Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) for putting the debate in context. He has shown that all hon. Members share an abhorrence of terrorism and are united in the need to defeat the terrorist threat. Building upon that consensus, the Labour party called on the Government to seek all-party agreement on a counter-subversive policy that would be developed, in the words of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights in Northern Ireland,

"to strike a balance between the need to detect and convict terrorists and the need to preserve basic civil liberties."

That offer has been rejected out of hand.

Unlike the Conservative party, the Labour party does not want simply to hold up the prevention of terrorism Act as some kind of talisman to ward off evil terrorists, as legislation which takes no account of an individual's civil rights and which brings the law and the security forces into disrepute.

Mr. Gallie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: No, I shall not give way.

We want the exclusion order abolished because it violates at least six basic human rights, including the right of freedom of movement contained in article 2 of the fourth protocol of the European convention on human rights; the right to a fair and public trial contained in article 6; the right to respect for private and family life in article 8; the right to freedom of association in article 11; and rights to participate in public affairs and to seek work and improve economic circumstances. If there is insufficient evidence to bring a person before a court of law, there are insufficient grounds to impose internal exile. In a democratic society, the Government cannot simply ignore the due process whenever it is convenient to do so.

I have deliberately excluded various other matters in order to reduce the time of my speech, but I want specifically to turn to another part of the community which suffers inhibitions as a result of the legislation.

One of my hon. Friends spoke about the Irish in his constituency. A survey by the *Irish Post* found that one in 10 Irish males living in Britain have been detained under or affected by the prevention of terrorism Act. This harassment only adds to the sense of alienation felt by the Irish community in Britain. Although I am not suggesting that it leads people to support the IRA, it certainly does nothing to enhance their perception of the impartiality of the justice system in Britain.

The same survey found that, in the wake of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and other similar cases, 80 per cent. of the Irish in Britain doubted that they would receive a fair trial for a terrorist-related offence. Those figures starkly illustrate the legitimate fears of the largest ethnic group in Britain. While I accept criticisms of such a postal questionnaire, those who replied are the articulate, opinion-forming members of the Irish community.

The prevention of terrorism Act has only a symbolic value, but on this matter more than any other symbolic politics are not enough. The Government have tried to take the high moral ground in the fight against terrorism, and they singularly fail.

The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) spoke about nitrates being used in explosives. I raised the matter with the Department in July; when I suggested that there might be reason to refer explosives and nitrates to the explosives inspectorate, I received the following reply:

> "I understand that ammonium nitrate is classified, in line with United Nations recommendations, as an oxidising substance rather than an explosive. It is in widespread use in agriculture, and the Health and Safety Executive has published guidance for its safe storage. I do not believe that any further controls would be workable. Accordingly, I have no plans to refer the matter to the explosives inspectorate." —[*Official Report*, 15 July 1992; Vol. 211, c. 779.]

It took a couple more bombs and a few more threats for me to write to the Secretary of State and get a reply from Earl Ferrers that the Department had suddenly realised the importance of nitrate and its value to the terrorist.

Those are the people who say that we are complacent about the terrorist threat when something has been lying around the country and they are unable to deal with it. We are not having any of that from them, especially when it was not the Labour party that allowed the Harrods bombing suspects to remain at large in London for 33 days.

The chief crime correspondent of *The Mail on Sunday*, Chester Stern, wrote that MI5—the Minister praised MI5 for having control of the terrorist campaign—insisted on holding back video security tapes which led to the capture of the suspected terrorists within hours of them being screened publicly. Disagreements between the police and MI5, whom the Government have placed in charge of anti-terrorist observations, allowed suspected IRA bombers to roam the streets of London for over a month longer than necessary.

During that time, another bomb was placed on a rush hour train leaving Victoria station, and we had to wait until three days after the bombing in Camden for MI5 to relent and release the pictures. I am happy to say that the public reacted quickly and within hours two suspects were arrested.

The decision to adopt such a high-risk strategy, despite police objection, would never have been countenanced by a Labour Government. The Labour party has never put the lives of the people of London at risk in such an incredibly cavalier manner. The consequences of such a policy could easily have been death and mayhem in the streets of London.

The Government talk to us about being easy on terrorism. The evidence was there, but they wanted to play clever dicks, and as a result two further bombs were placed, possibly by those under suspicion. They had the evidence, they had the photographs, but they refused to release them, and those men were roaming the streets of London for 33 days.

That story has never once been challenged, denied or contradicted to *The Mail on Sunday*, its editor or the reporter: I checked that with them today. Let us have none of that nonsense from the Government, that somehow they are the only people who are hard on terrorism because they have the fig leaf of the prevention of terrorism Act, which does no good at all.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This afternoon, in my constituency, we buried a young man—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am trying to listen to the hon. Gentleman's point of order. It is difficult when there is so much noise in the Chamber.

Rev. William McCrea: This afternoon we buried a 25-year-old man in my constituency because of IRA terrorism. Can we hear what the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman has to say about the right to freedom of movement for Nigel McCollum, who was buried this afternoon? What about the right to family life—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not a matter for the Chair what the Front-Bench spokesmen of either party have to say.

Mr. McNamara: I have every sympathy with that family and with the families of all people who have been killed in terrorism in Northern Ireland, but I must say quite sincerely that it appears that the prevention of terrorism Act did not work in that sad case.

6.57 pm

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: First, I hope that I never see the day when the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) is responsible for operational

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

matters which hon. Members will have raised, even with the assistance of *The Mail on Sunday*. I am also sorry that I did not take up the invitation which he issued on behalf of the Opposition, when he was addressing the Machiavelli society at Hull university, to have talks on the renewal of the Act. However he and his hon. Friends made it quite clear that they are opposed to key provisions in the Act.

I have had robust support for our proposals from my hon. Friends the Members for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) and for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), among others. My right hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler), who has a liberal reputation and great expertise in these matters, supported them, and the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) also said that the common-sense judgment was to renew these powers. The Ulster Unionists also support us.

I understand why the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) feels instinctively that we should not have exclusion orders, but I assure him that the exclusion orders which disrupt the traffic across the Irish sea—81 remain extant, although we made only two new ones last year—disrupt the effectiveness of the terrorist threat on both sides of the Irish sea.

The main serious objection throughout is that we should have a judicial role in all this. Lord Colville has been much invoked. I pay tribute to Lord Colville who has been widely accepted as a good and impartial observer, and I take comfort from the fact that he is satisfied with my exercise of the powers.

On the point about judicial intervention, I refer to Lord Colville's 1987 report, which actually considered that matter. It was not his annual report. In paragraph 12.1.6, he makes it quite clear why he believes that the introduction of a judicial function would add nothing to safeguards and would not be practicable. Indeed, in that section of his report he defends the adviser system.

It is said that the Act is not successful because it does not result in a sufficient number of charges. I have said that I use its powers only when I am satisfied that charges can be made—but many other things flow from the Act. It is not true that few of those who are detained are then charged. In Great Britain, since the beginning of 1992, 19 people detained under the Act have been charged with serious terrorist-related offences. Indeed, about a quarter of all those detained are charged with serious terrorist offences. Without the powers of the Act, we would be frustrated, in part, in our efforts against terrorism.

I ask the House to renew the order. I make one last plea that we should renew it without a vote, to give some real meaning——

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [5 March]:—*

The House divided: Ayes 329, Noes 202.

Division No. 180] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui

Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cryer, Bob
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hardy, Peter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*

Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steinberg, Gerry
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wolfson, Mark
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 (Continuance) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.

Orders of the Day

FOREIGN COMPENSATION (AMENDMENT) BILL *[LORDS]*

As amended (in the Standing Committee).

To be considered tomorrow.

Rating and Valuation

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

The House divided: Ayes 295, Noes 58.

Division No. 181] **[7.14 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*

Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Robert Hughes.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Allen, Graham
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Byers, Stephen
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Enright, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Henderson, Doug
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hutton, John
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mullin, Chris
Rooney, Terry
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Turner, Dennis
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With the leave of the House, I shall put together motions Nos. 4 to 19.

Hon. Members: Object.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Glasgow Underground (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

The House divided: Ayes 249, Noes 49.

Division No. 182] **[7.25 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes

Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Allen, Graham
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan *(Oldham C'tral)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Enright, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Janner, Greville
Jowell, Tessa
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Mullin, Chris
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Redmond, Martin
Rooney, Terry
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Industrial and Freight Transport (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

The House proceeded to a Division—

The Tellers having come to the Table—

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. As I understand it, the doors were locked in the middle of the vote, which is not

correct procedure. As soon as I found out that that had happened, I reported to you that I was not satisfied that the vote had been carried out in the correct manner.

I understand that, during that period, some hon. Members went through the doors. I realise that, in your view, it was not unfortunate that the doors were locked for only a short period, but I am sure that you will accept that it is unprecedented for the doors to be locked during the eight minutes that are made available for hon. Members to vote. I can only suggest that the vote be taken again.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am advised that hon. Members went into the Lobbies without being counted. I have to order another Division.

The House having divided: Ayes 181, Noes 43.

Division No. 183] **[at 7.47 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Horam, John
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Jamieson, David
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mullin, Chris
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Redmond, Martin
Rooney, Terry
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Turner, Dennis
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Lochaber Power Company (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I point out that these Divisions on non-contentious matters which are of great benefit to the people and councils of Scotland are a dastardly attempt by the Labour party to rob the people of Scotland of cash which they deserve and which there is no reason to stop?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): That is not a matter for the Chair, but the hon. Gentleman may be aware that the general public will read *Hansard* and make their judgment accordingly.

The House having divided: Ayes 180, Noes 33.

Division No. 184] **[7.59 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Butcher, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rooney, Terry
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

NOES

Bayley, Hugh
Callaghan, Jim
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dowd, Jim
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
McAvoy, Thomas
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prescott, John
Redmond, Martin
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Andrew F. Bennett.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Mercury Communications Ltd. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 158, Noes 41.

Division No. 185] **[8.10 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Butcher, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy

Fishburn, Dudley
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Morley, Elliot
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bennett, Andrew F.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hall, Mike
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
McWilliam, John
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Redmond, Martin
Rooney, Terry
Simpson, Alan
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Dennis Skinner and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Mines and Quarries (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 148, Noes 42.

Division No. 186] **[8.20 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Butcher, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shre)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Tony
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael

Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bennett, Andrew F.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hall, Mike
Hinchliffe, David
Hood, Jimmy
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Pickthall, Colin
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Redmond, Martin
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Oil Related and Petrochemical Plants (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for English Labour Members to seek to defeat this order, thus ensuring that business rates in the oil industry in my constituency would be raised by 85 per cent.?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is open to any hon. Member to object to any motion.

Later—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have asked the Clerk to inquire what the delay is in both Lobbies. If an hon. Member is purposely sitting there, it is verging on contempt of the House.

The House divided: Ayes 147, Noes 41.

Division No. 187] **[8.36 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Bennett, Andrew F.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Butcher, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hood, Jimmy
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Tony
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Purchase, Ken
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rooney, Terry
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Boateng, Paul
Callaghan, Jim
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Gunnell, John
Hinchliffe, David

Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Kilfoyle, Peter
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Redmond, Martin
Rogers, Allan
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Winnick, David
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Terry Lewis and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next motion, I draw the attention of the House to the fact that any obstruction of the Division Lobby is not acceptable to the Chair.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Scottish Hydro-Electric plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

The House divided: Ayes 135, Noes 37.

Division No.188] **[8.56 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Beggs, Roy
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Butcher, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, A. Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. James Arbuthnot and
Mr. Andrew MacKay.

NOES

Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Bennett, Andrew F.
Boateng, Paul
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Hood, Jimmy
Lewis, Terry
McAvoy, Thomas
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Purchase, Ken
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Turner, Dennis
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Jimmy Wray and
Mr. Eddie Loyden.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I call the next motion, may I say that I propose to invoke Standing Order No. 39. For those hon. Members who are not familiar with the Standing Order, after the lapse of two minutes on each motion I shall call the Ayes to stand and then to sit down and then the Noes to stand and then to sit down. I shall then make a judgment as to whether there is a clear majority one way or the other.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you might reconsider your ruling. As I understand it, that procedure has normally been used in the middle of a Bill. I cannot recall an occasion when it has been used on statutory instruments. The history of statutory instruments is of considerable importance as they all used to be taken on the Floor of the House. Only with the permission of the House are they referred to a Committee upstairs on the basis that, when they return, it will be possible for the House to express a clear view; in other words, for all hon. Members to record precisely their vote.

May I suggest that if you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the Government wish to proceed along this line, it is possible that my hon. Friends will decide that they do not want any orders to go upstairs to Committee. As I am sure you will appreciate——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The decision is a matter entirely for the Chair. I have not consulted anyone. It is my view that it is now appropriate to invoke the Standing Order.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The wording of Standing Order No. 39 is:

"Mr. Speaker or the chairman may, after the lapse of two minutes, if in his opinion the division is unnecessarily claimed".

You have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you propose to exercise your discretion. However, surely there is a responsibility upon you to tell the House why you believe a Division is being unnecessarily claimed. I have a case to put to you that——*[Interruption.]* I am quoting from Standing Order No. 39, which says:

"if in his opinion the division is unnecessarily claimed".

I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these Divisions are being necessarily claimed. Some of us have voted in different Lobbies on different orders.

May I draw your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the fact that I voted against the draft Electricity Generators (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I accept the hon. Gentleman's word. However, I made it clear that my decision would be made after a lapse of two minutes; I did not say what that decision would be. I said that if, in my opinion, it was necessary to invoke Standing Order No. 39, I would do so.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am the Chairman of both the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments. We have made the complaint that in 1992 the Government produced more statutory instruments than have ever before been produced in the history of Parliament. It would be a very serious departure from parliamentary scrutiny if the torrent of statutory instruments produced by the Government were not then subject to a vote on the Floor of the House. That would mean that the legislative sausage machine that the Government are using would become even worse.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already made it clear that the House will not be denied a vote; the House will get its vote.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 143 (Withdrawal of strangers from House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House divided: Ayes 0, Noes 170.

Division No. 189] **[9.10 pm**

AYES

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Boscor, Sir Nicholas
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dixon, Don
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Flynn, Paul
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gunnell, John
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hood, Jimmy
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Illsley, Eric
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lewis, Terry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Moss, Malcolm
Mullin, Chris
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Parry, Robert
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robe[illegible], Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Rober[illegible]on, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, [illegible]k *(Somerton)*
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David

Wood, Timothy
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Irvine Patnick.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you reconsider yet again your decision to invoke Standing Order No. 39? As I recall, the last time that that was invoked was in 1979—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should be heard.

Mr. Meale: On that occasion, 13 votes had already taken place. Surely we have not yet reached that stage in these proceedings.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I entered the House considerably earlier than 1979; and if the hon. Gentleman looks back he will find other precedents. In any case, we have already had 10 Divisions.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it your intention to invoke standing order No. 39 in respect of motion No. 19, which concerns the controversial issue of the common organisation of the market in potatoes, because I am keen to register a vote agin it?

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. One at a time.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not want to pursue the question of your ruling, but I would like you to explain how you will implement your ruling, to protect the rights——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am quite happy to do that when the time comes.

Mr. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Skinner.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On the few occasions that Standing Order No. 39 has been invoked since 1970—although that has happened recently—I have been present. The occupant of the Chair invoked the Standing Order only when there were seven, 10 or a dozen hon. Members in the Chamber. On no occasion were 30 or 40 hon. Members voting—not while I have been here. On the last occasion that I recall, when we were up most of the night, only a handful of hon. Members were voting. It was relatively easy for the occupant of the Chair to see the numbers involved clearly. To do it on the basis of——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret that the hon. Gentleman's memory is not perhaps as good as it used to be. Mr. Harry Barnes.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In the 1986-87 Session, voting in the last three Divisions before the Standing Order was invoked was 167 to 32, 166 to 31, and 166 to 31.

Mr. Skinner *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is the same scale——

Mr. Skinner: You are wrong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask hon. Members to contain themselves. Points of order from any part the House are important.

Mr. Barnes: On a point of order. Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek your further ruling in respect of the point of order raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) in respect of motion No. 19. Initially, that motion was considered by European Standing Committee A and, in a Division, the voting was four votes to two.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already told the House that I will consider each motion on its merits. We have reached motion No. 11; we are nowhere near motion No. 19.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You said that you would consider each order on its merits. As an individual Member of Parliament, I ask you to provide a procedure whereby my name is recorded as being in favour of the next order. "Erskine May" states:

"Neither names nor numbers of a minority are now announced, though the numbers appear in the Journal."

That would be insufficient to indicate that I voted in favour of the order about the nuclear power industry. I appeal to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to allow a Division so that *Hansard* can show that I voted in favour of the valuation order as it relates to the Scottish nuclear industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hear the hon. Gentleman's appeal, but I regret to say that I cannot meet it.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask you to consider how to ensure that there is sufficient time for hon. Members to get into the Chamber to express their views—as is their right—and that that is made clear on the Annunciator? Each order deals with a different subject, and an hon. Member may well decide not to vote on, for instance, the Scottish rating and valuation motions but to vote on the social security motions, or the motion relating to potatoes. You have a duty to protect the rights of Back Benchers, who rely on the Annunciator to know what is going on in the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. However, 15 minutes have elapsed since I announced the position, and I assume that most—indeed, all—hon. Members now know what is going on.

I shall now put the Question on motion No. 11. The Question is——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I hope that it is a new point of order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: It really——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is this a new point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: No, it is not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In that case, I shall put the Question on motion No. 11.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the draft Scottish Nuclear Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

As many as are of that opinion say Aye—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Order. In my opinion, the Division has been called unnecessarily. I therefore call on hon. Members supporting the motion to rise in their places. Will those against the motion do the same?

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is no point of order for me.

Mr. Bennett: Hon. Members are still coming in.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Will those who are voting No please stand? They have to be counted. Will hon. Members please stand still?

Mr. Meale: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. A major difficulty has occurred because of your ruling on this Division. We on this side of the House clearly heard the words from your lips, "Clear the Lobbies." That being the case, hon. Members on this side of the House must be allowed to vote through the Lobby.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I gave adequate warning. The difficulty is that the House is not used to this procedure.

Mr. Meale: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We should like you to reconsider your ruling. The reason is that, when you uttered the words, "Clear the Lobbies", hon. Members left the Chamber and went into the Lobby, following which the Division bells sounded. Those hon. Members remained in the Lobby and missed the vote. Some of them went to other parts of the House. We ask for a further ruling.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members make their own decisions. I made very clear what procedure I was to invoke. That procedure is laid down in the Standing Orders of the House.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When I have finished one ruling I shall be happy to take another point of order. *[Interruption.]* Order. Let me announce the result of that Division. In my opinion, the Ayes have it.

Mr. Dixon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On that occasion, you definitely said, "Clear the Lobbies." The Division bells rang and it went on the Annunciator. Then my hon. Friends went into the Lobby. May I ask you how many voted Aye? No one took any account of those who stood in favour of the motion, although the Clerks counted those who voted against it. How can you have a proper Division when there are no Tellers?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Clerk's responsibility is to count the minority, which he did. On this occasion it was the Noes. It may be the Ayes on a future occasion. The Clerk undertook that responsibility and reported the result to me. *[Interruption.]* Order. In my judgment, the Noes were so far below the Ayes that the motion was accepted. *[Interruption.]* I do not need to count. It was quite clear that there was a majority in favour of that motion.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that all of us in the Chamber, particularly those of us who have held chairs in various capacities, understand the difficulties that you face today—as well as the difficulties that some hon. Members might face in the next three days, difficulties that could have been relieved. Am I right in thinking that the procedure under the Standing Order is that the request to stand takes place on the second call after two minutes? Will you please confirm that? May I suggest that the difficulties that we have just experienced were caused by the fact that many of my hon. Friends—and nearly myself—did not understand that the moment to stand, if there was to be standing, was then and not earlier?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I think that the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber when I explained that I proposed to invoke Standing Order No. 39. I spelt out the implications, and the record will show that I did. The fact that hon. Members are perhaps not aware of how Standing Order No. 39 works is not a matter for the Chair. I ask hon. Members to pay proper attention to announcements from the Chair.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: For the sake of clarification, and to ensure that there is no further confusion or misunderstanding, Standing Order No. 39, for those who —*[Interruption.]* Order. Will the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) do me the courtesy of listening? Standing Order No. 39 states:

"Mr. Speaker or the chairman may, after the lapse of two minutes, if in his opinion the division is unnecessarily claimed, take the vote of the House, or committee, by calling upon the Members who support, and who challenge his decision, successively to rise in their places; and he shall thereupon, as he thinks fit, either declare the determination of the House or committee, or name tellers for a division."

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I ask for clarification? I was working in my office when the Division bells rang. The Annunciator clearly stated that there was a Division in the House, and the bells were ringing for everyone to hear. There was no way that any hon. Members working in their offices could know that they had to be in the House immediately to stand up at the appropriate time.

That meant that hon. Members who were working in their offices when the Division was called thought that they had the usual eight minutes in which to come to the Chamber. I seek your guidance on how hon. Members in that situation were supposed to know that the Division was being called on the Floor of the House in an unusual way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Lady will be aware that I gave full warning 15 minutes before calling the Division.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. How can I give a proper answer to the hon. Lady if other hon. Members rise?

I gave full warning 15 minutes prior to calling the Division what the procedure would be and when I would invoke it. Hon. Members are required to keep abreast of

what is happening here. They must use their judgment about whether to leave the Chamber to work. My judgment is to give due warning, which I did to the best of my ability.

Mr. Meale: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I crave your indulgence for a second or two? Is it part of the procedure in such cases, when Standing Order No. 39 is invoked, to say, "Clear the Lobbies" and to call a Division?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, it is. If I say, "Clear the Lobbies", that is part of the required procedure. I must follow the procedure of the House as laid down by the Standing Orders. I have no room for discretion in that matter. My discretion concerns whether I announce the Tellers.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I seek clarification on how you weighed the votes for the Division. I think that the responsibility of the Chair in these circumstances is to protect the minority from those who try to shout us down. The point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this: those of us who voted No were asked to stand in our positions here. You then said that you thought that the Noes were a minority. May I say how impressed I am by your clairvoyance and perception, because nobody stood on the other side. How do you know——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I did ask the Ayes—those who supported the motion—to stand, and all the hon. Members whom I can see on the Government side of the Chamber stood, and some Opposition Members, too. Then I called the Noes. After a delay, the Noes stood and were counted by the Clerk—[HON. MEMBERS: "How many?"]. It was clear where the majority lay. [HON. MEMBERS: "How many?"] Thirty-four.

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Scottish Nuclear Limited (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Scottish Power plc. (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Dixon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker —[HON. MEMBERS: "Where is the hat?"] On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is the hat?"] On a point of—[HON. MEMBERS: "This is during a Division."] I rose on a point of order before the Division was called—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I regret to say that I did not hear the hon. Gentleman's point of order before I called the motion—*[Interruption.]*—but I shall take the point of order now, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to raise it and it follows the procedure of the House. The Question has been put, so I should be grateful if the hon. Member would follow the procedures of the House and wear— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Dixon *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am happy to give guidance if the hon. Gentleman will follow the procedure of the House.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that the Procedure Committee recently recommended that, when there was an alteration during a Division—[HON. MEMBERS: "What? An altercation?"]— when there was an alteration to procedure during a Division, a message should be shown on the Annunciator. I am referring to what happens when a Division is extended.

In those circumstances, it was recommended that some message should be displayed on the Annunciator to show hon. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) who are coming to the Chamber from outside the precincts of the Palace of Westminster that they have extra time in which to vote. My suggestion is that perhaps it would be better for the House to be suspended for sufficient time to allow for hon. Members in and about the Palace of Westminster——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that that procedure is primarily for security alerts and other events of that nature.

Motion No. 12. As many as are of the opinion say Aye. to the contrary No. Clear the Lobbies.

Mr. Meale *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For the benefit of hon. Members in the Chamber, will you tell us: is this a Division? Are Members going into the Division Lobbies or not?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: "Clear the Lobbies" means clear the Lobbies of strangers. Hon. Members have had it explained to them several times that, if they wish to take part in the Division—which is entirely voluntary—they should remain in their places. After two minutes, if I believe it appropriate, I shall either call the Tellers, in which case there will be a normal Division, or I shall ask Members to rise in their places.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER, *having said that it appeared to him that the Division had been unnecessarily claimed, accordingly called upon the Members who supported and who challenged his decision successively to rise in their places, and he declared that the Ayes had it, forty-two Members only who challenged his decision having stood up.*

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Dixon: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would you explain the procedure under Standing Order No. 39 because there seems to be a lot of confusion, not among Opposition Members, but among Conservative Members? How will you tell whether there is a consistent vote if the vote for the Noes is not declared at the end of each vote? May we be given the number of those voting against at the end of each vote, and can that be put on the Annunciator so that people outside know that there is a Division and how many are voting against the motion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House is entitled to know that 42 hon. Members voted against the motion.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask for clarification. I am sure that it would be helpful if the Clerks stood to count hon. Members. They remain seated, so they must have difficulty in counting. I understand that to challenge the

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[Mr. Martin Redmond]

count made by the Clerks would be to challenge your decision, Mr. Deputy Speaker and obviously I do not want to do that. However, while the Clerks remain seated, there is a possibility that they will miscount.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House has experienced Clerks, and I think that we can rely on their ability to count.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker—[Interruption.] *I shall put my point of order if hon. Members stop baying. It is difficult for folk like me who have a hearing aid to hear everything in the Chamber when there is such noise. Hon. Members who, like myself, suffer from that disability will be helped by other hon. Members keeping quiet when they raise a point of order. I was moving so fast that my wife could not have counted me. How you could you count me, Mr. Deputy Speaker?*

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Water Undertakings (Rateable Values) (Scotland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you confirm——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Where is the hat?

Mr. Skinner: He does not need a hat.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Where is the proper hat?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will you confirm, Mr. Deputy Speaker——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The House insists on hats. There is one at either end of the Chamber.

Mr. Skinner: His head has only got to be covered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hat must be on.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Where does it say that I must wear a hat? Which page?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to wear a hat.

Mr. Skinner: He does not have to.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Mr. Deputy Speaker, will you confirm——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I call upon those supporting the motion to rise in their places. I call upon those opposing the motion to rise in their places.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must sit down.

Question agreed to.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I understood the rules, an hon. Member has to be covered. I understood that the recommendation from the Select Committee on Procedure was to provide the House with two hats but, because many hon. Members felt that it was not dignified to wear a hat like that, an hon. Member was entitled simply to have his head covered. I understand that it was custom and practice for an hon. Member to put an Order Paper on his head. If you can direct us to where it says that an hon. Member has to wear one of the hats as opposed to covering his head, I shall be grateful.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There seems to be great concern in the Chamber about the way in which proceedings are developing. Would it be appropriate for Madam Speaker to be asked to come to the Chamber so that we might have proper rulings on these matters?

Mr. Redmond: On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will be aware that Madam Speaker's predecessor allowed the practice of an hon. Member covering his head with an Order Paper. Has there been a change of practice?

Mr. Michael Connarty (Falkirk, East): On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My point of order is much more simple. In the year that I have been in the House, I have not heard three consecutive points of order go unanswered. It seems strange that we have a new procedure in the House. I have heard Madam Speaker say that she will answer one point of order before another is taken. We now have three points of order outstanding without an answer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: My understanding is that the Select Committee on Procedure said that a hat should be worn. As the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) was provided with a hat, courtesy to the Chair suggests that he should have worn it.

Council Tax Benefit

Motion made, and Questions put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Council Tax Benefit (General) Amendment Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 11th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Meale *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Have we had the 10 o'clock motion?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is no 10 o'clock motion tonight.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *stated that he thought that the Ayes had it; and on his decision being challenged, it appeared to him that the Division was unnecessarily claimed, and he accordingly called upon the Members who supported and who challenged his decision successively to rise in their places, and he declared that the Ayes had it, thirty-five Members only who challenged his decision having stood up.*

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Council Tax Benefit (Permitted Total) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 11th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Meale *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When you called the previous vote, I do not know whether it was because of the noise from the other side of the Chamber, but several of my colleagues and I certainly did not hear the motion on which we were voting. Therefore, it seems that many hon. Members have been through a voting procedure on at least three occasions when they did not know the order on which they were voting. I would appreciate your guidance on where we are at present and whether the previous three votes were in order because of the lack of a number.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are now on motion No. 15. I announced the previous motions very clearly.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York) *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Deputy Speaker. For the previous two votes, I heard no announcement of the numbers voting. On one vote, I noticed two hon. Members—the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) and the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker)—voting both Aye and No. Did the Clerks count the No votes on both sides of the Chamber? You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, could clarify the matter by giving the numbers voting Aye and those voting No on the previous two motions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members will know that if they vote Aye and No on both sides, they are counted on both sides.

Mr. Connarty *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is clear that hon. Members are now becoming disturbed by the Deputy Speaker's authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) asked whether Madam Speaker could be called to the House as we have now reached the stage when it is clear that some hon. Members believe that the procedures of the House are being manipulated—and the Clerks are overpaid——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ask those supporting motion No. 15 to rise in their places. Is the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who is walking, voting Aye? It does not matter whether he is voting in the Gangway; it applies to anywhere in the House.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *stated that he thought that the Ayes had it; and on his decision being challenged, it appeared to him that the Division was unnecessarily claimed, and he accordingly called upon the Members who supported and who challenged his decision successively to rise in their places, and he declared that the Ayes had it, two Members only who challenged his decision having stood up.*

Question agreed to.

Redundancy Payments (Local Government)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the draft Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Mr. Graham: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As a comparatively new Member who has been in the House of Commons for six years, may I say that I have recently spent weeks on end in the Standing Committee on the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill where we discussed the abolition of the wages councils. On that occasion, the Government called for secret ballots and the right to have recorded votes, but here tonight we have seen Government Members standing up to vote. Is that democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Will you please rule on that?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am duty bound to operate by the proposals of the Select Committee on Procedure.

Mr. Fatchett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should like to take you back to your ruling on the point of order during a Division when an hon. Member was told to wear a hat. The penultimate paragraph of page 366 of "Erskine May" states:

"Only when a question of order arises during a division may a Member speak seated and covered."

My hon. Friend did exactly that. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, might argue that there has been a change of practice——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There have been a number of points of order. To which hon. Member and to which point of order is the hon. Gentleman referring?

Mr. Fatchett: I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify the matter. I was referring to my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours).

I should like to refer to the footnotes in "Erskine May". One argument that may have been available to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there has been a change of practice. The footnotes on page 366 refer to parliamentary debates, and it is important to put them on the record. They read:

"Parl Deb (1883) . . . c 854; . . . (1886) . . . (1904) . . . (1945-46)".

The footnotes also state:

"See also 2nd Report from the Sessional Committee on Procedure, . . . (1976-77),".

Some long-serving Members will recall that there was a debate on this issue in 1979-80 and a further debate in 1983-84. There has been no subsequent debate or reference.

Mr. Speaker Weatherill always allowed a point of order during a Division when an hon. Member wore a hat or was covered in some other way. I shall refer to personal experience. Under Mr. Speaker Weatherill, I raised a point of order during a Division and I wore a handkerchief, as if I were on the beach at Blackpool. It was knotted in the peculiar seaside way and looked appropriate. Mr. Speaker Weatherill accepted that point of order.

With respect, Mr. Morris—I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker; we have spent so much time in Committee debating Maastricht that you will understand my mistake—the footnotes on page 366 show that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington was in order, and it would be appropriate for you to recognise that. We all make mistakes and I think that you have made a mistake on this occasion and should allow my hon. Friend to make his point of order in the appropriate way, the way in which he was behaving. We need clarification.

If we are to protect minorities, the practices of the House should not be changed from the Chair. They should be changed only with the agreement of the House, and there has been no such agreement or debate. My hon. Friends have not been able to contribute. This is an important change in procedure and should not be made unilaterally by the Chair. I contend that you are out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that my hon. Friend the Member for Workington was in order and should be upheld.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am not seeking to change the procedure. I am guided by the Procedures Committee's recommendation in 1977, subsequently endorsed by the House, that the definition of "covered" was wearing a hat. It need not necessarily be an opera hat: it may be a handkerchief. Some of us wear handkerchiefs in that way in the summer in strong sunlight, especially those of us who are a little short of hair. It is clear that an Order paper is not a hat.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Your ruling is important, because——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I did not make a ruling: I gave the reference on which the ruling was based.

Dr. Clark: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Was your reference to the Order Paper a ruling, and are you saying that custom and practice since 1977 has been changed and the understanding is that hon. Members' heads will not be deemed to be covered if they are wearing paper, as has been the custom? To clarify the situation, would it be helpful to suspend the House for a short time so that the matter can be sorted out through the usual channels, because you are making an important ruling?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can envisage a situation where a properly constructed paper hat was appropriate, but not an Order Paper.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I attempted to raise a point of order on motion No. 13, which you decided to ignore and go on to a vote. As a new Member of the House, I have today been to the Library to get my speaking record in the House because people in my constituency may wish to see the contribution that I have made. I wanted to ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether I was recorded as voting on motion No. 13. Would I have had the right to vote because I came in when the vote appeared to be taking place? I wish to have recorded for my constituents whether or not I was involved in the vote on motion No. 13, which is very important. Despite the gesticulations of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), I still wish to know whether I was recorded in the vote on motion No. 13.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows, and I clarify, that under this procedure names are

not recorded. However, the hon. Gentleman is known as an assiduous hon. Member and his constituents will know him as such. They will know that he was here this evening and raised an important point of order.

Mr. Bennett: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether you will reflect on the proceedings in the House in the past hour. I suggest that they do not do the House much credit. However, I suggest that the Opposition have a legitimate right to express their disquiet, and the attempts to curtail the voting tonight shows simply that the usual channels have failed to deal with the problems that have arisen over private Bills.

Will you reflect on the fact that, by using this voting procedure, you have become involved in those arguments and have allowed the procedures of the House not to be shown in their best light? Would it not be a good idea to revert to the normal voting procedures so that we can continue and perhaps during the next vote, in the Division Lobbies, the usual channels can sort out the many problems which have developed over private votes?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I repeat what I said at the beginning. I am taking each motion on its merits. I have not decided that every one of the motions will be taken on a rising and sitting basis, and I certainly made a note earlier to consider that.

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Connarty *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to know whether the hat which I am wearing will fit the description of being covered—or must I turn it this way? Must I also put my hand in my jacket? Is this sufficient covering?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my judgment, for this evening, it is.

Mr. Barnes *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On Standing Order No. 39, under which the votes are taking place, although I have put my name down as a Teller I am not absolutely sure what it is that we are voting on according to the Standing Order. Are the votes taking place on challenging your decision, or are they on the motions on the Order Paper?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: They are simply on whether the Ayes or the Noes have it.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *(seated and covered)*: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can we be serious for a moment? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman should be heard. I shall finish the Division and then return to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order.

So that there is no confusion, I confirm that we are voting on motion No. 16.

Question agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Redundancy Payments (Local Government) (Modification) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 15th February, be approved.

RATING AND VALUATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Water Undertakers (Rateable Values) (Amendment) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 4th February, be approved.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

The House divided: Ayes 143, Noes 40.

Division No. 190] **[10.20 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shre)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gill, Christopher
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Merchant, Piers
Moate, Sir Roger
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Pawsey, James
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter

Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Andrew McKay.

NOES

Bayley, Hugh
Bennett, Andrew F.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Hood, Jimmy
Illsley, Eric
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAvoy, Thomas
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Parry, Robert
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Rooney, Terry
Skinner, Dennis
Spellar, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Andrew Meale and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The confusion among hon. Members earlier about whether they should rise or sit to cast their vote may have arisen because they had forgotten that Standing Order No. 39 was invoked in July 1975 by the Labour Government against my right hon. Friends and myself and various Members present today, including the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should have said "under a Labour Government".

It might be for the convenience of the House if I try to clarify matters. I now have the second report of the Select Committee on Procedure from the 1976-77 Session, paragraph 5 of which on page 6 says:

"Your Committee consider that the requirement to be covered should remain, and that any form of headgear should be acceptable, but that for reasons already stated, such articles as hankerchiefs or Order papers, which are instantly available to all Members, should not be accepted."

The Committee considers that the same rule should apply to lady Members. It recommends that a second piece of headgear should be kept behind the Chair. I hope that hon. Members will accept that that is the reference that has guided me this evening.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Will you remind the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who I understood was a master of procedure, that he is wrong? A Labour Government did not exercise the procedure; Mr. Speaker did. Perhaps he should know the rule.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought that I had made that clear.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, clarify the position with regard to wearing the hat? Many of us are deeply embarrassed at having to wear headgear of such a nature. *[Interruption.]* It is a fair point to make. We believe that it brings ridicule on Parliament and on us as Members. Therefore, as the proceedings of the House are now televised and transmitted all over the world, will you consider raising the matter with the Chairman of the Procedure Committee with a view to avoiding such embarrassment for Members?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows as well as I do that any Member can raise such a matter with the Procedure Committee. I shall cogitate on whether it is appropriate that I should, but the hon. Gentleman may wish to make his own submission. I hope that that has finished the issue of the hat.

Mr. Cryer: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During this evening's discussions and points of order, it has become clear that there are difficulties with the new microphone system. When hon. Members remain seated, as they are required to do during a Division, particularly those on the Front Bench, they are well out of range of the microphones. The new microphones were installed relatively recently, and clearly they are inadequate—particularly in respect of right hon. and hon. Members seated on the Front Benches near yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Also, the microphones are normally switched off until a right hon. or hon. Member is called, when the nearest microphone is switched on. However, there appears to be some delay in that respect. I did not hear, for example, the point of order of my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) because he was inaudible—not because of the noise in the Chamber but because of the lack of amplification. If this procedure is invoked again, that could lead to myriad points of order by seated right hon. and hon. Members. It might be helpful if the sound engineers could ascertain whether the microphones might be pointed downwards, so that points of order from seated right hon. and hon. Members wearing appropriate headgear might be heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Life is full of difficulties, but I will bring the hon. Gentleman's point to the attention of the Supervisor of Broadcasting.

Mr. Connarty: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You quoted a definition to the effect that a readily available item would not be considered suitable headgear. You probably saw me labouring away at making this hat, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would placing it behind the Chair be appropriate? Also, I am not someone who naturally wears a bonnet or an opera hat. Could not a decent, well-designed fedora also be placed behind the Chair?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I quoted the reference, and I urge the hon. Gentleman to read *Hansard* tomorrow morning and then decide on the kind of hat that he considers appropriate, within the rules of the House.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) to sit in that laconic way on the arm of his Bench?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Right hon. and hon. Members should sit on the Benches.

Dr. Godman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been sitting here listening quietly to your various

comments. Perhaps I may ask you, in what I hope is a typically polite way, whether you are in a position to reply to my earlier point of order about motion No. 19?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: We are taking the motions one at a time.

MEDICINES CONTROL AGENCY

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

That the draft Medicines Control Agency Trading Fund Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 10th February, be approved.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees.)

POTATOES

That this House takes note of the Court of Auditors' Report concerning the financial year 1991 together with the institutions' replies (OJ No. C330, Volume 35) and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 25th February 1993 relating to the draft Council Recommendation to the European Parliament on the discharge of the General Budget of the European Communities for the financial year 1991.—*[Mr. MacKay.]*

The House divided: Ayes 127, Noes 53.

Division No. 191] **[10.37pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marlow, Tony
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Irvine Patnick and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Alton, David
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bennett, Andrew F.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Harvey, Nick
Hood, Jimmy
Illsley, Eric
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAvoy, Thomas
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Parry, Robert
Pike, Peter L.
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Redmond, Martin
Rooney, Terry
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tyler, Paul
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Harry Barnes and
Mr. Alan Meale.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) for drawing my attention to the fact that, on 1 July 1975, following a Division in which the Ayes voted 222 and the Noes 13 and in which I was a Teller, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) raised with the then occupant of the Chair a point of order, in which he said:

"Following the announcement of the clear intention of the Liberals to call Divisions on every amendment, I would point out that Mr. Speaker has it in his power under Standing Order 36 to rule on unnecessarily claimed Divisions, to take appropriate action and to call votes in the Chamber."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1975; Vol. 894, c. 1363.]

What has happened tonight is consistent with the wise words of the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): The House is certainly a mine of information this evening.

Mr. Skinner: It is fair to point out that, during the 23 years that I have been a Member of Parliament, I have been consistent in never trusting the Liberals. I did not do so on that occasion. I took appropriate action and, what is more, always will, because they are junior Tories.

Court of Auditors

10.49 pm

The Paymaster General (Sir John Cope): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the Court of Auditors' Report concerning the financial year 1991 together with the institutions' replies (OJ No. C330, Volume 35) and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 25th February 1993 relating to the draft Council Recommendation to the European Parliament on the discharge of the General Budget of the European Communities for the financial year 1991.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I must inform the House that Madam Speaker has selected no amendments.

Sir John Cope: The motion takes note of the report of the Community Court of Auditors on the 1991 expenditure of the Community. It is a long report, just short of 500 pages, with a long commentary from the Commission, and it is also the subject of a long explanatory memorandum from the Treasury, which I hope that the House has found helpful.

As the House knows, the court's duty is to report whether the Community's revenue has been properly received and the expenditure properly incurred and on whether the financial management of the funds has been sound. The report is an important, independent check in itself, but it is also a valuable tool for the Council of Ministers, the European Parliament and others, including the national parliaments—but especially for the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament—which are the two arms of the budgetary authority of the Community, to examine how well the Commission and the member states have managed the Community's resources.

The court's report is forwarded to the Council of Ministers and, from there, to the European Parliament. The Council and the Parliament examine the report along with the accounts and financial statement submitted by the Commission. The Council will then usually recommend, and the European Parliament will decide to give, what is called a discharge to the Commission over its implementation of that year's Community budget.

The intention is that the Council's recommendation should be discussed and, I expect, adopted at the Economic and Finance Council next Monday.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The court was critical of the aid provided for the temporary laying up of fishing vessels. The report states that access to that aid was, to say the least, unequal. What means are available to our fishermen, who have suffered, to redress the grievance? Have they the right to compensation—sometimes for having been denied fair and reasonable treatment because of the regulation—under the treaty of Rome, or do they have to wait until the treaty of Maastricht is ratified?

Sir John Cope: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman satisfactorily off the cuff, but I shall answer later in the debate if I am able. Perhaps I may proceed with general remarks about the report and the treatment likely to be accorded to it after our discussion.

The draft Council recommendation, which the Economic and Finance Council of Ministers is expected to consider on Monday, is also available to the House and is,

of course, the subject of another explanatory memorandum. However, the main explanatory memorandum, which was submitted on 5 February, gives a comprehensive summary of the report itself. The report is, by itself, an extensive survey of the Community budget; it also contains some important remarks by the court.

The report rightly emphasises the Court of Auditors' continuing concern about financial management, and control in the Community and identifies two main reasons for the deficiencies: inadequately drafted legislation, and poor arrangements for management and monitoring. These are deficiencies which go to the heart of financial control and of value for money. The Government consider that they raise issues that the Community must continue to address. Of course, those concerns are not new. Indeed, in highlighting the deficiencies of financial management, the report picks up criticisms that were central to the court's previous report, on the 1990 budget.

The Government's concern to secure value for taxpayers' money from Community spending was the reason why the Chancellor of the Exchequer raised the issue with the Commission, with his ministerial colleagues and with the European Parliament, at about this time last year. A copy of my right hon. Friend's letter to the Commission was sent to the Scrutiny Committee and placed in the Library. As the House would expect, our concerns were taken seriously. Considerable advances have been made since then, although the situation is still not satisfactory.

Even before that, in 1990, an important amendment was made to the financial regulation which sets out the detailed rules for implementing the Community budget. The United Kingdom had long been concerned that the rules did not emphasise that, in spending the revenues provided by Community taxpayers, the Community did not take sufficient account of value for money. The financial regulation was amended in 1990 to include a specific reference to the need for economy and cost-effectiveness in Community spending.

In consequence, proposals for spending must now be justified by reference to value-for-money criteria. The court's most recent report picked up that requirement as a yardstick for considering the Community's performance, and drew attention to important inadequacies in that performance—notably the need for the Community to appraise proposals for spending against clear objectives before spending any money; to monitor the effectiveness of the spending at the time; and to evaluate the outcome and then adjust future programmes as necessary.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The Paymaster General mentioned the letter written by the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the then chairman of the Finance Council—Dr. Macedo of Portugal—of which copies were sent to Commissioner Schmidhuber and the chairman of the parliamentary budgetary council of the European Parliament. The letter raised some important issues, which the right hon. Gentleman has already mentioned. As he said, the letter is in the Library for us all to see. Was there a specific response to it, or was that subsumed in the process that he has just described, which may have started a little before the letter was sent?

Sir John Cope: Yes, the process that I have described took place in 1990, as I believe I explained. There was a response to last year's letter, too. It was discussed further and has been taken up since, as I shall tell the House in a moment. It was followed through—most importantly in the negotiations on future financing which took place in Edinburgh but also, meanwhile, in various discussions in the Economic and Finance Council.

The points raised by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at that time have been an important aspect in the consideration of the Community's finances ever since.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I appreciate the Minister's sincerity, but does he accept that what was agreed at Edinburgh was a budget of £31,000 million for the EC to spend on agriculture this year? Does he accept that the cereal mountain is the highest it has ever been in recorded history, and that we have an horrendously large set-aside system which is costing us dear? Does he accept that, so long as there is a crazy policy, no matter how good Ministers are or how hard the Commission tries, nothing can be done to resolve the problem?

Sir John Cope: My hon. Friend is not quite right; his approach to the matter is over-pessimistic. As I said, I do not think that the position is satisfactory, but I think that it improved a bit as a result of the Edinburgh considerations. The position has improved further since then.

Among the conclusions at Edinburgh, there was an unambiguous requirement that the Community's resources should not be committed without a thorough prior appraisal which demonstrated that there would be economic benefits in keeping with the resources deployed.

More specifically with reference to the structural funds, of which the Court of Auditors has been critical, the Heads of Government concluded that financial control should be strengthened, and that greater emphasis should be given to appraisal in advance, to monitoring and to evaluation afterwards. They also concluded that assistance should be allocated where appraisal showed that medium-term economic and social benefits commensurate with the resources were involved and that operations should be adjusted in accordance with the results of monitoring and evaluation.

I point out to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) that the additional funds to which he drew attention, which were decided on at Edinburgh, are part of the conclusions reached at Edinburgh. The different parts of those conclusions—to spend the money and to have the criteria to which I have referred—depend on one another; they are part of the same resolution.

Since the Edinburgh conference, the criteria have been applied more rigorously, although not so rigorously, no doubt, as my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East would like or as I would like. In the agreement in the Foreign Affairs Council last Monday, there was a regulation for the interim cohesion fund, about which my hon. Friend, like me, will be interested. The matter was agreed in principle at Edinburgh.

The regulation agreed last Monday in the Council explicitly requires the prior appraisal of projects; it explicitly requires that, before approving a project, the Commission must assess the appraisal against value for money criteria; it explicitly requires that beneficiaries have the management and audit systems to ensure that the projects are effectively implemented; and it further explicity requires that the Commission is responsible for

[Sir John Cope]

ensuring the adequacy of those systems. The operations are to be reviewed to ensure that the original objectives have been achieved. Those are specific requirements for which the Court of Auditors, the Council and the European Parliament, through the Budgetary Control Committee, can look out. The Commission is under an obligation to put those requirements into practice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East will realise that matters cannot become magically perfect in a short time, but I believe that real improvements have been taken on board by the Council of Ministers, by the Commission and by the European Parliament.

The steps that I have described concern value for money—avoiding wasted expenditure. The Community has also addressed the important issue of fraud, which is also a matter of concern. During the United Kingdom presidency, constructive steps were taken under that head. The matter was discussed at the Economic and Finance Council more than once, and we set up a high-level group of officials under United Kingdom chairmanship to agree some practical steps to improve the prevention of fraud.

Those practical steps included an improved programme of action for the Community's fight against fraud—the 45-point programme—and ways in which to improve co-operation, including the Commission agreeing to take a more positive co-ordinating role and work to continue on simplifying legislation. That is one of the weaknesses in the system, and a special group is considering it with the anti-fraud issue in mind. Vague or poorly defined legislation is one area highlighted by the Court of Auditors in the report before us. The quality of administration and financial control depends very much on the quality of the legislation on which it is based. All those are important points on fraud. The steps that I have outlined are not the whole answer to improving financial management in the Community, but they take us down the right road.

In the explanatory memorandum on the draft Council recommendation, we set out the key features, which include value for money and the importance which the Council attaches to that. Attention is also drawn to problems of management which might permit fraud or other irregularities—not fraudulent—and the Council's commitment to continuing action as agreed by ECOFIN last autumn is restated. It is also important to draw attention, as we do in the explanatory memorandum, to the Commission's commitment to review periodically the justification for on-going actions and to call on the Commission to report on the steps that it has taken to improve its internal procedures.

These are important conclusions which the Government welcome, just as we welcome the report of the Court of Auditors and its valuable comments on the financial management, value for money, evaluation of Community funds and the need for member states to assume their responsibilities more fully, because much of the Community expenditure goes from the Commission through the mechanisms in the member states themselves.

It is an important report. The explanatory memoranda on the report have given the Government an opportunity to express their views. I think it is in the interests of the House that I should not go into more detail now, but should leave time for hon. Members to contribute and then do my best, by leave of the House, to respond to the points they raise.

We have to remember all the time that, although the legal term for Community revenue is "own resources", none of the money belongs to the Community institutions —it is taxpayers' money which has to be raised by the member states. It must therefore be used with the utmost care and attention to value for money and to the avoidance of fraud. The report of the Court of Auditors helps the Community to do just that.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): Can my right hon. Friend say what changes there are in the Maastricht treaty which would improve the quality of financial management in the Community institutions and enhance the accountability of the Commission?

Sir John Cope: There are some changes. The amendment to the financial regulation to which I referred was an initial step. At Maastricht, the members of the European Council built on that. Among the improvements to the treaty which were agreed, and which I believe will be ratified before long, it is made explicit that the Commission, in implementing the Community budget, is responsible for the sound financial management of the Community's finances. Responsibility for that is placed firmly on the Commission.

In addition, the Court of Auditors will be strengthened and made a full-blooded Community institution. The European Parliament's powers of scrutiny will also be strengthened. There is an explicit requirement that member states should pursue fraud against the Community's budget with the same vigour as they pursue fraud against their own national budgets.

Those changes in the treaty represent an important move forward in strengthening the framework necessary to improve the management of the Community's finances. We shall have many opportunities to debate those matters on another occasion. In the meantime, I commend the Court of Auditors' report to the House.

11.9 pm

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): It would seem that the Court of Auditors' report does not have quite the same entertainment value in terms of pulling an audience as the proceedings on the previous votes. Anyone who thought that the report might be dull should read it, because the absurdities in it are equal to anything we saw in the procedural farce earlier in the House.

As the Minister said, the report is important. It covers 55,327 million ecu, or £46 billion, of expenditure, to which the United Kingdom contributed revenue of a gross £5·6 billion. The report leaves no doubt that there are errors, irregularities, fraud and waste on a disturbing scale in a number of areas of the Community's financial affairs. Some of that is the responsibility of the member states themselves, some is the result of legislation which is unclear or inconsistent, and some is the result of inadequate supervision by the Commission. Whatever its cause, it is unacceptable and more resolute action needs to be taken as a matter of urgency if it is to be rooted out.

Resolute action is crucial to ensure that public money is not wasted or misappropriated, and thereby to build public confidence in the efficacy of Community action and expenditure. No one should under-estimate the damage

which is inflicted on the whole Community and on its future by the shortcomings identified in the court's report. Given the difficulties to which the auditors referred in monitoring all the expenditure and revenues involved, it would surprise no one if, despite the quality of the auditors' work, what they uncovered was only part of the whole iceberg.

The Minister talked about the changes which the Maastricht treaty would bring about. One of those changes is that the auditors will be required to certify that the accounts are a true record of the Community's finances. It disturbs me greatly—I hope that it disturbs the Minister—that an article in *The Guardian* on 27 November quotes sources at the Court of Auditors as saying:

"If we had to certify these accounts, we would not do so."

That shows how much progress must be made if the irregularities and fraud are to be controlled in the way in which people would expect, and if we are to have confidence in the way in which the Community's finances are being maintained.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those member states which as yet cannot properly manage their own income tax and VAT do not give us much confidence that they will properly manage EC funds?

Mr. Smith: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. I shall refer to the different numbers and sorts of discrepancies which have been discovered in different member states. On the whole, the United Kingdom's performance in terms of the regularity with which the operations are supervised that our authorities have responsibility for supervising is a good record. Sadly, that record is not equalled in some of the other member states.

The explanatory memorandum to which the Minister referred is a useful summary of the auditors' report and a helpful guide to its 496 pages. The report's dead-pan language does not fully do justice to the scale and seriousness of the problems which the Court of Auditors' report identified.

If I were to go through all the irregularities, this would be a long speech. Instead, I shall pull out some examples. In the collection of so-called traditional resources, the member states' six-monthly reports of frauds and irregularities are an important element of what is, after all, largely a delegated system of control. On that subject, the auditors say:

"Useful information is rarely provided, and cannot in every case be used to justify their effectiveness"—

that is, the effectiveness of the reports. Perhaps that accounts for the fact that in 1991 the United Kingdom reported 223 such cases—nearly a third of the Community total—whereas, to take a topical example, Italy reported only 25. That may have a bearing on the point raised by the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs).

It is disturbing that there were instances of identified own resources not being made available to the Community. The largest such example was one of no less than 1·4 million ecu, which one customs district in the Netherlands failed to pay over. That was rectified by the Dutch authorities when the Court pointed it out. I hope that the Government will use their voice strongly in the Council to support the Court's recommendation that the Commission monitors more closely the implementation of the relevant legislation in member states.

Also of concern is the amount of interest due to the Community on late payments of customs duties, which amounts to 25·7 million ecu—16·9 million of it in Germany. The report states that the court has brought that matter to the attention of the Commission and the member states involved. I should be grateful if the Paymaster General would say whether that money has now been paid.

There were many issues of concern relating to the operation of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund. The court's report stated that about half of the expenditure of that fund involved measures that can reasonably be regarded as the inescapable consequences of surplus agricultural production: in particular, aids for the export or destruction of products—34 per cent.—and intervention—18 per cent.

In addition, the Court found that

"some production aid schemes, which are intended to support rural communities, are actually obstacles to rational development. High rates of subsidy are paid in order to render viable small farms which would otherwise be uneconomic. There are premiums which encourage farms to remain small or which encourage the breaking up of farm holdings in order to qualify as small farmers."

Those premiums include higher rates of aid for small olive producers, which the Court of Auditor's report states is not an effective way of supporting rural communities, since

"producers can continue to benefit from aid after they have moved to the towns and the cities".

That is plainly not a measure that supports rural communities.

The report notes that budget expenditure on the special premium for beef and veal producers has increased from 52·5 million ecu in 1987 to almost 305 million ecu in 1991. The scheme was meant to compensate for the cut in the previously excessively generous buying-in price in order to save money, but the report states:

"Despite the situation of surplus production, the criteria for granting the special premium do nothing to curb its intrinsic incentive effect. The premium is not selective since there are no conditions laid down as to the type of holding that is eligible or as to the quality of the products, and worse still within the annual limit of 90 animals per holding, there is no provision for preventing increases in the number of male cattle in respect of which the premium is paid."

The Court also notes that the Commission authorised an exemption from that limit in France without any legal basis. The Commission has said that it will re-examine that issue. I should be grateful if the Paymaster General would give us more information on that subject, as it seems to be a clear instance of favourable treatment to one member state not being enjoyed by others.

In paragraph 7.56, the Commission states that many of the concerns, including those about the beef and veal premium, have been met by reform of the common agricultural policy adopted by the Council in 1992. I question whether anyone can rest easy on any of the issues. We must underline the importance of constant review and changes in the means by which we work towards achieving the objectives of article 39 of the European Community treaty, which stated that, while we should aim to achieve "a fair standard of living for the agricultural community", we must be aware of the very real need to

"increase agricultural productivity by promoting technical progress and by ensuring rational development of agricultural production and the optimum utilisation of factors of production."

There must be a much more radical reform of the common agricultural policy. Nothing less will do.

[Mr. Smith]

There are other examples of irregularities and curiosities in the report. The court questioned the legitimacy in the United Kingdom of the administration of the sheep annual premium scheme, and provided an extraordinary example. Six shepherds with no more than eight sheep each formed a group with a limited company to claim for 6,024 sheep, and were awarded full payment for them. I have heard of people counting sheep, but that is ridiculous. I welcome the court's work in bringing that to light, thereby ensuring that the rules have been tightened to prevent such practices.

The report contains more worrying examples of vested interests conspiring to misuse EC taxpayers' money. It states that work on the olive cultivation register is bogged down in Greece, blocked by a lack of funds in Portugal, and behind schedule in Spain. It also says that spot checks are limited. Such a lack of information causes severe problems. In Corfu, flat rate aid was paid on three times the amount of olive oil that was produced.

Wine-growing measures financed by the agricultural guidance fund also attracted criticism. The report says that the simultaneous use of two opposing methods—premiums for replanting and for the final grubbing up of vines to achieve market equalibrium—was illogical. It states that wine growers using land of identical quality may choose between one Community aid to replant their vines and another for their final grubbing up. One wonders where the guidance element in the work of the EC agricultural guidance and guarantee fund is to be found.

The report says that there is some inconsistency in promoting measures which increase production capacity in a market that is in constant imbalance because of plentiful supply and constantly falling demand, while maintaining the possibility of distilling surplus quantities.

My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) spoke about the court's comments on common fisheries and the seas. It questioned the operation of withdrawal premiums to compensate for monetary abstention from profitable fishing, supposedly to encourage conservation of fish stocks. The report says that compensation has been paid in Portugal

"for days when no fishing would be carried out anyway thus adding about 40 per cent. to the European taxpayers' contribution."

The report also says:

"the amount of the temporary withdrawal premiums is not attractive enough to dissuade fishermen from carrying out fishing activities at times when it is possible to fish for the most profitable species—which are the ones that are threatened by overfishing."

According to the Court, 40 per cent. of expenditure on temporary withdrawal premiums subsidises traditionally low periods of fishing activity.

Dr. Godman: I should like to ask my hon. Friend about what I call the Portugese fiddle. Is he confident that the Maastricht treaty, if it is ever resuscitated by the Danish people, will lead to a diminution of such frauds? Does he agree that it is more likely that the Maastricht treaty will increase fraud?

Mr. Smith: The provisions in Maastricht for enhancing the status and powers of the Court of Auditors and putting stronger injunctions on member states and the Community to secure value for money in the Community's programme should help. However, as I said earlier, more determined action is required. The British Government, through the Council of Ministers, should be calling for the schemes which are most open to abuse to be threatened with closure unless the abuses are ended. Some of those programmes required radical reform.

Sir Teddy Taylor: May I point out that the British Government have no power to do anything except ask?

Mr. Smith: The British Government have the power to raise the issue in the Council of Ministers. The Minister said that these matters were pursued during the British presidency. I share the scepticism of hon. Members who believe that member Governments wanting those abuses stamped out must take a firm stand.

Dr. Godman: There is a discrepancy in the Maastricht treaty in the way in which the two courts—the European Court of Justice and the Court of Auditors—have been treated. The European Court of Justice will have formidable powers, particularly in imposing sanctions against recalcitrant member states, but no such equivalent powers have been given to the Court of Auditors.

Mr. Smith: As I said earlier, the powers of the Court of Auditors would certainly be strengthened by Maastricht. It would be required to provide a statement of assurance on the reliability of the Community's accounts and there would be an explicit responsibility on member states to tackle fraud. As we have said on other occasions, the treaty is a framework. What policies are initiated and pursued through that framework is a matter of political will.

We are in favour of tougher action to stamp out abuses, including the 5 million ecu of movable property which was unaccounted for in the European Parliament. Our colleagues there will need to look into that before effectively discharging themselves from the censure of the auditors' report.

The final, and perhaps most disturbing, items on the list of abuses as they involve taking food out of the mouths of starving children, are the failings in the food aid programmes to the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Romania. As well as identifying appalling instances of mismanagement, the court questioned the practice of charging that to the agricultural budget.

There are a number of disturbing examples of how things went badly wrong. For example, the Soviet authorities gave the Commission a list of beneficiaries. The Commission did not specify exact destinations when making the individual transportation contracts. The report states that, as a consequence,

"the German Red Cross discovered that some organisations they chose to deliver to had already received deliveries from the French Red Cross and could not store any more items. The Commission accepted alternative destinations . . . and met the consequential increase in transport costs from 262 ecu per tonne to 392·39 ecu per tonne."

In February 1992, of the 79,500 tonnes for which the Commission had to organise transport, only 44,000 tonnes had been taken over by the transporters. The remainder was costing the Community taxpayers storage charges, because dates of final delivery had not been properly specified in the contracts with the transporters.

It is also appalling to read about 740 tonnes of skimmed milk powder delivered to Bulgaria and subsequently sold for foreign currency on the Egyptian market, using a

Greek middle man. So blatant was the fraud that they did not even bother changing the packaging before it went on sale.

The House should commend the work of the Court of Auditors in bringing all that to light. While it would be wrong to blame the Commission for all the irregularities uncovered, some of which are clearly the result of member states and agencies not getting their act together, it would be equally wrong to accept the Commission's grudging response to some of those very serious matters. It is not good enough for it to say, as it does on page 322:

"The Commission agrees that some difficulties arose in the implementation of these schemes of emergency aid to Eastern Europe"—

an understatement if ever there was one. It then went on:

"The Commission does not agree with the Court's accusations of a lack of transparency and insufficient controls on the operations."

It is plain that there were not sufficient controls on the operations.

Still less is it acceptable for the Commission to accuse the court, as it was reported as doing in *The Guardian* on 27 November, of making observations and a recommendation

"relating directly to the policy goals and content of Community action."

It is the job of a proper audit not merely to check that the accounts add up—and it is clear from what I have said and from what the auditors were quoted in that article as saying that in many of those programmes the figures did not add up—but to assess whether the programmes and procedures pursued were actually geared, and geared consistently, to the objectives set by Community laws, regulations and policies.

I therefore support what the Government say in the explanatory memorandum about the importance of a rolling action programme to tackle fraud, improvements to financial control, and better co-ordination by the Commission and between member states. However, I believe that more needs to be done. After all, for the past 14 years, the Government have been sitting on the Council of Ministers. They have seen a succession of reports, a number of which have raised irregularities and frauds as blatant as those in the report before us. As well as handing out their share of criticism, the Government should take their share of responsibility, in that the Council is responsible for overseeing the Commission and for setting the direction of Community policy.

Does the Paymaster General undertake that, both on the instances cited in the report that relate to the United Kingdom and on the broader criticism of the various programmes in the report, he will report back to the House on the progress, or otherwise, being made with actions to eliminate abuse? There has been insufficient follow-up and tough action on many of the abuses and irregularities that the Court of Auditors has identified. The House and the people should have the right to know exactly what action is being taken by the British Government to stamp out such grotesque abuses of the Community budget.

Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on additionality, which the auditors say in paragraph 599 is still not sufficiently verifiable? Can he assure the House that the Government will be able to satisfy the Commission on additionality so that the up to £1 billion in European Community regional aid grant which has been put at risk by delays in matching funding for projects for Britain's most depressed regions, can go ahead?

Can the right hon. Gentleman also tell us the position on the accumulated devaluation effect on Britain's allocation from the European social fund, amounting over the period of 1990 to 1992 to some £82 million? Will that extra money be spent as it should be for the benefit of the long-term unemployed and our depressed regions, or will it be a repeat of the British presidency, when the Government forced out of the Edinburgh summit the proposal for £160 million expenditure on training for those who had lost their jobs or whose jobs were at risk, despite support for the project by the other 11 member states?

When Community resources appear to have been misappropriated elsewhere, it would be an indefensible irony if resources to which Britain's depressed regions and unemployed people were legitimately fully entitled were to be denied them—not, on this occasion, by fraud in the rest of the EC but by the Government's dogma and reluctance to act.

11.35 pm

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): It has taken us about 500 years to develop a satisfactory system of audit of public expenditure in the United Kingdom, and our present system goes back 130 years. Against that background, it is not altogether surprising that the European Community institutions are still effectively in their infancy when it comes to dealing with audit. I agree with the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) that the report and its predecessors leave much to be desired.

We know from our experience of audit in the United Kingdom that there is financial and regularity audit and, secondly, value for money audit. On both counts, it is clear that the EC institutions, and the Commission especially, fail completely to meet the standards that we as taxpayers are entitled to expect. First, on financial and regularity audit, it is clear that there is widespread fraud throughout the Community. There are not the standards that one would expect. Secondly, on value for money audit, it is clear that there are not the systems in place for assessing value for money. Criteria are not set out before projects are developed. Systems are not in place for assessing projects after projects have been executed. There are fundamental concerns which have been raised year after year.

There are two basic reasons for the concerns. First, there is no great incentive for individual member states to make significant improvements. If a state tackles its own back yard, so to speak, the result will be a reduced amount of money from the Community. In other words, there is a disincentive to tackle the issues. Secondly, there is still a less than satisfactory system of accountability. If we compare the system of accountability of the Commission to the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament with the system which prevails in the United Kingdom —we have a National Audit Office which reports to the Public Accounts Committee, which then submits to tough questioning the accounting officers responsible for public expenditure—we see that the system in the Community leaves much to be desired. We must improve the systems of accountability, and I do not suppose that that will be easy.

It is not a coincidence, for example, that the number of cases of reported fraud was higher from the United Kingdom than from any other member state. That merely shows that we have a reasonably effective system. Unfortunately, the systems in other member states leaves much to be desired. It is almost certain that the prevalence of fraud in other member states is much greater, which shows that they are not very good at, or not especially interested in, trying to detect it.

I think that it is down to the European Parliament to take a greater interest in these matters. It is impossible for us, in a 90-minute debate, to give proper consideration to these problems. The report before us goes into great detail on all the different areas of Community expenditure. The report should be considered paragraph by paragraph by the Budget Commitees of the European Parliament. The Committees should call before them the Commissioners responsible for the various heads of expenditure and keep them there until they give satisfactory replies to questions about who was responsible and how matters will be put right in future. That seems to be the right forum.

I have given some thought, as have other members of the Public Accounts Committee in the past, to whether we could carry out the function in the United Kingdom, but I have come to the conclusion that that is not possible. The European Parliament, to which the Commission is accountable, should take a greater interest in these matters. That is why I ask my right hon. Friend the Minister what changes have been made in the Maastricht treaty to try to improve the system of financial management and accountability.

I am glad to hear that the constitutional position of the Court of Auditors will be reinforced and that the European Parliament is to be given an enhanced role. But when the treaty is ratified we shall have to see how that works out in practice. That requires not just a statement of good intent but the necessary political will on the part of those involved. I am not yet persuaded that Members of the European Parliament take all this sufficiently seriously. British taxpayers have a right to expect that money spent on their behalf by the European Commission is spent in an honest straightforward manner in accordance with the purposes for which it was voted.

The hon. Member for Oxford, East mentioned additionally. That is a difficult issue. It is difficult to demonstrate additionality when it comes to expenditure in the regions. Usually, if there is investment in a particular region, it simply means that investment in another area has been displaced. One is simply moving investment around the country or around the Community. The Department of Trade and Industry at least has some objective criteria for determining what additionality means and tries to assess projects on that basis before approving them, but it is clear from the report that there are no similar arrangements in the EC.

Mr. Alan Meale (Mansfield): Surely the hon. Gentleman is not saying that EC funds coming into Britain should be distributed in the way that the Government have attempted. For example, RECHAR or RETEX funding should be going not to the south of England but to areas which have lost an amazing number of jobs in coal, steel and textiles. It is illogical for the Government to come forward with such a suggestion.

Mr. Smith: I was not suggesting that such money should come to the south of England, although the rate of unemployment in some areas there is now higher than in some of the regions. I was simply pointing out that when in the past the Public Accounts Committee has considered regional expenditure—I recall a recent report on expenditure in Wales—we have naturally cross-examined the accounting officer, the permanent secretary from the Welsh Office, on the important question of additionality.

It should be possible to show that new jobs have been created and that jobs are not simply being lost elsewhere in the United Kingdom. That is what additionality means, and it is important in a United Kingdom context, and in the context of European regional expenditure. That is why the Court of Auditors has drawn attention to it.

Mr. Meale: I was trying to say that RECHAR provided money from Europe for areas which had lost jobs in coal mining. RETEX, similarly, provided money for areas in Britain which had lost textile jobs. The Department of Trade and Industry has redirected that money to different areas for different jobs in different circumstances where there had been no coal mining or textile jobs in the past. That cannot be logical or correct.

Mr. Smith: I understand that, but I do not wish to be diverted down that road because it is not relevant to the report that we are discussing. The hon. Gentleman may well be right. I know nothing of that.

The point that I was discussing was the question of additionality in the context of the report. It is a good example of the way in which the Commission needs to tighten up on value for money and fraud. The way to achieve that is to try to enhance accountability by persuading the European Parliament to take a greater interest in these issues.

11.43 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) has mentioned two important institutions, domestic and European, in this scene—the Public Accounts Committee and the European Parliament and, in particular, its Committee concerned with this topic. I shall mention both of those in the course of my remarks.

I want first to put on record a sense of dissatisfaction that it was Her Majesty's Government's intention that, however events proceeded this evening—and they have been somewhat unusual—there would be only an hour and a half for this debate. That was clearly the Government's intention in the business motion on last Friday's Order Paper. By chance, it was frustrated—but still only one and a half hours is available for this debate. That would have remained the case if the Government had been successful and the debate had started at around 7 pm. I regard that as unhealthy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) clearly showed, the report contains many items which require ventilation and some expression of dissatisfaction.

That is even more important than some hon. Members described. The question of taxation and the authorisation of its expenditure—without any question of its value for money—is a central feature of any Government. It is the responsibility of any Parliament to ensure that it is done correctly. It is also at the centre of any democracy. The European Community claims that it prides itself on being a democracy. Unfortunately, we do not have much control over the passage of money from the United Kingdom to the European Community, which the Court of Auditors oversees by way of its own resources. By virtue of the European Communities Act 1972, the Treasury hands over so much per year from the three main resources that the Community has at its disposal.

That is decided from time to time by the Economic and Finance Council, and the framework is changed roughly every five years. That expenditure does not come before the House and is not part of the Budget, although it is part of the public expenditure Estimates that we see from time to time. The House is cut out of that process.

The House is also cut out of determining how that money is spent, other than by our representatives in the respective Council. The money is spent in a number of controversial ways, but I particularly want to draw the attention of the House to the way in which that money is spent irregularly and the consequential effects, which may be political.

We know from our history that the way in which public money is distributed and those who are to benefit from it are highly political matters. In a democracy, only when Parliament and the elected representatives of those who provide the money have complete control of it can proper democracy and accountability exist. We rely for that on the Public Accounts Committee. In the 18th century and early 19th century, the constitutional position was that those in power got hold of money through patronage, and distributed it in various ways. The Gladstonian reforms made us all respectable.

The Public Accounts Committee tries to ensure that public money is spent on the authorised purpose for which it was raised, appropriated and allocated by the House. The PAC has in its hands at least some sanction. The prospect of being summoned before the PAC or being investigated by the Comptroller and Auditor General—now an Officer of the House—has some effect, although we still have problems and read about them from time to time.

Any person—a Minister, official, or anyone else in receipt of public funds—knows of the existence of the long arm of the Comptroller and Auditor General, with the backup of the Public Accounts Committee and the threat of exposure. What is the equivalent in the Community, which has vast sums at its disposal and complex accounting because of the ecu and having to deal with different Governments and agencies in different languages? Year after year, the Court of Auditors produces a report of which we always say in our debates that if only one tenth of it applied to any one organisation, it would be given a qualification by any auditor in this country. That has been going on for years. We debate the report, and say the same things, year after year.

What happens to the report? The Commission comments on it, and then it goes to the Council. I must express some dissatisfaction. The Council acts as referee: after the national Governments have taken on board all the contents of the report, the Council then examines the Commission's responses. That is fair enough. Auditors often ask for explanations in the course of their work; they are entitled to ask questions, and many of the replies may be satisfactory—as, indeed, some of the Commission's replies may be. But what happens next?

I understand that the various member Governments and their respective Treasuries then reach some consensus on how far the Commission has given satisfaction in answering the questions raised by the Court of Auditors. When they think that the Court of Auditors is right, they should say so; when they think that the Commission has answered its questions satisfactorily, they are not drawn to the Council's attention in its discharge meeting.

As I understand it, the rights of the Public Accounts Committee within ECOFIN—the Council of Finance Ministers, which is surely the equivalent of the PAC—are concentrated in one person, the Paymaster General. He is the PAC's equivalent, but only collectively within the Council, which will meet on 15 March and reach a final conclusion—equivalent, perhaps, to a report that we might receive from the PAC.

Sir John Cope: The hon. Gentleman is right: I expect to represent the Government at a meeting of ECOFIN on Monday. I think, however, that the nearest equivalent to the PAC is the European Parliament's Budgetary Control Committee.

Mr. Spearing: In a sense, the Paymaster General may be correct: that is where the buck stops. The Budgetary Control Committee receives a recommendation, which will be drawn up by ECOFIN on 15 March—we have a draft,

[Mr. Spearing]

or the indication of a draft, before us—and will then decide what to do. I assume that the Committee has powers to summon witnesses, to make reports and to reach some sort of conclusion. Perhaps it should issue the final judgment on the 1992 accounts.

I am rather disappointed with what is before us as I had hoped that we would be able to discuss some sort of draft recommendation. We have the explanatory memorandum, dated 25 February, which the Paymaster General has signed. In paragraph 3, he says:

"In its Recommendation the Council has, in particular"—

followed by eight paragraphs. I shall not take up the House's time by reading them out, but they are a poor set of paragraphs and a shadow of what we read in the report of the Court of Auditors. I shall not embarrass the Paymaster General—or shall I?—by reading out the formulations. I hope that they were not drafted in our own Treasury, although I have no doubt that Sir Humphrey would be very proud of some of the sentences.

I will give a few samples. For instance, the Council

"emphasised the importance it attaches to funds being administered in accordance with Article 2 of the Financial Regulation and reiterated its attachment to monitoring and ex-post and ex-ante assessment".

Of course. That is part of the job, is it not? There is nothing new about that. The Council also

"stressed the importance it attaches to the Court of Auditors report as a tool to improve the implementation of the Community budget."

That is what is going on in the so-called discharge. I see nothing in this draft for that European Parliament Committee to get its teeth into. I know that it can look at the report of the Court of Auditors, but it ought to take its cue from the Council of Ministers' so-called discharge, because I do not believe that it is a discharge—frankly, it is a disgrace.

Hon. Members may ask me what it is upon which I base that assertion. Let us look at some of the better reports to be found in the other document that the Paymaster General signed. He has therefore done something for us. I refer to the preceding memorandum dated 5 February. Under the heading "Introduction", we read:

"The Court identifies two main reasons for deficiencies in financial management and control. First, they may be due to inadequately drafted legislation."

That is just it. Many of the regulations that come before us are incapable of providing the hooks, knobs and indicators which allow auditors to get to work. It is no use having an auditor unless he has something to look at.

The memorandum says:

"some of the practices used by the Commission to collect revenue are, in the Court's view, contrary to the Financial Regulation".

That does not appear in the Council's conclusions, does it? It goes on to say:

"there are deficiencies in the supporting documentation submitted by member states in respect of agricultural guarantee expenditure."

The Court of Auditors found that,

"because records for VAT and GNP own resources are incomplete, transactions cannot easily be traced in the accounts."

It sounds like a qualified report all the way through, does it not?

In paragraph 21 we read:

"The Court noted that a substantial proportion of the aid for the temporary laying up of fishing capacity had been granted for periods which are unfavourable for fishing".

That paragraph has already been quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). I shall therefore leave it to one side.

In paragraph 45 we see:

"The Court noted that in the absence of a principal authorising or accounting officer a number of disbursements under the Fourth Lomé Convention had been made illegally . . . (ii) bank guarantees covering advances paid to contractors do not appear in the financial statements; . . . (v) because of the transfer to the new computerised accounting system, it is not possible to reconcile 20 per cent. of the records for the fifth and sixth EDFs with end-year balances."

Dr. Godman: It has been said several times that the Maastricht treaty enhances the status of the Court of Auditors. If that is so, would that enhanced status meet some of my hon. Friend's criticisms?

Mr. Spearing: I am afraid that my hon. Friend has caught me there, rather like the Paymaster General. I should have looked at that famous treaty just to see the extent to which the effective power of the Court of Auditors is increased, other than by being brought formally into the institutional family, of which it was formerly perhaps an associate member. If I looked at those articles, I suspect that I should need the help of persons who have been members of the Court of Auditors to understand them. British representatives have been very active in the Court of Auditors. Only they would be able to make the proper evaluation for which my hon. Friend correctly asks. That is perhaps beyond the powers of any hon. Member, but Treasury officials might be able to make such an evaluation.

I intend to refer to two sums of money which are of particular interest. One relates to the European Parliament. In the third volume of the draft general budget for 1993, we see, under title 3, a sum of about £13 million for what is called, under article item 3706, political activities and, under article item 3708, information about the role and work of the political groups inside the European Parliament. This country is debating whether public funds should be used to support political parties. It is less well known in this country that that already applies to the European Parliament. I am wondering to what extent the European Court of Auditors can have a look at that.

I conclude by mentioning a subject which has not been raised so far. It involves an entry by the Court of Auditors in respect of some moneys granted in support of other organisations. I refer to page 465 of the voluminous report consisting of the Commission's replies, which mentions a grant for the European Year of Tourism 1990. I cannot remember very much about it, but I should have thought that there was already plenty of tourism within Europe without the Community having to stimulate it further. However, we had a European year of tourism, which went badly wrong.

The European Parliament asked the Court of Auditors to examine the organisation. The journal states that, for the objectives of the EYT to be met, there had to be

"some co-ordinated activity between the Community, the Member States and private organisations . . . Three types of activity were planned".

However, they did not happen.

Even more important, the resources allocated to the EYT turned out to be "7·7 Mio ECU", which I take to be 7·7 million ecu. If that is not the case, we shall no doubt hear from the Paymaster General. That sum was

"allocated in Parts A and B of the 1989 and 1990 budgets . . . whereas Council Decision 89/46/EEC had estimated the cost at 5 Mio ECU."

Presumably, 5 million ecu, which I suppose is about £3 million or £4 million, was allocated to that particular effort, which went 50 per cent. over budget.

However, it gets worse. Subcontractors were involved, and all sorts of things went wrong. I shall not detail them all, but I quote paragraph 19.68 which states:

"The Commission itself merely participated in events organized by third parties and took no initiative of its own regarding the EYT. As a result it failed to organise any sort of objective survey to evaluate the impact of the EYT, both on public opinion and on professionals in the tourist industry."

I do not know what the impact was meant to be.

The hon. Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) mentioned value for money. The project does not seem to have done very well, as 7 million ecu, or at least £5 million, was spent on it. I suggest to the Paymaster General that that fact could be added to the observations and recommendations if the Council wishes to discharge the accounts of which this matter is part.

12.2 am

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I hope that the Government will accept that it is an insult to the taxpayer and to the Court of Auditors that a handful of hon. Members are discussing this enormous report at 12.2 am, when no one will notice, hear or care.

It is also frightful to realise that the report contains a multitude of frauds, overspending and illegal spending. With reference to illegality, page 91 states:

"The Court noted that in the case of France the Commission has authorized, without any legal basis, an exemption from the limit of 90 eligible animals per year",

which is one of the key new agricultural issues. It cost a fortune. The Commission's response was that it would re-examine the issue.

Member states are acting illegally. Page 111 reveals that, in the case of a Portuguese sardine fishery, regulations were interpreted in such a way as to add 40 per cent. to the European taxpayers' contribution.

All the estimates by the Commission about the great savings that would be made seem to fade away. Page 54 outlines a case in which it was anticipated that "227 Mio ECU" was to be saved because of a remarkable change in policy, but it faded away.

There are further examples of crazy spending, of which the tobacco industry is a perfect one. Every year the expenditure increases on growing high tar tobacco and dumping it in the third world and in eastern Europe. Page 79 of the report says:

"over half of the maximum guaranteed quantity of the tobacco market receives a premium which is equivalent to 75 per cent. or more of the intervention price: 15 per cent. of this quantity receives a premium equivalent to 94 per cent. or more."

The tragedy is that the scandals grow greater every year. Ministers know that—and we certainly have a most patient Paymaster General. The CAP is totally out of control, with the mountains breaking all the records and expenditure at an all-time high, so that the poor families in all constituencies are paying massive extra sums for their food.

The plain fact is that there is nothing that anyone can or will do about that. It is sad to see one of the most able and useful Treasury Ministers sitting on the Front Bench and hearing us talking about all those crazy injustices. They are nothing to laugh at. The poor people and the local authorities of Britain are being deprived of cash for things that are needed while money is being wasted and poured down the drain.

Mr. Meale: Does the hon. Gentleman not find it peculiar that senior officials of the legal profession should be found trying to account for a document that shows an enormous amount of illegal activity and wrong auditing?

Sir Teddy Taylor: There is massive illegal activity and illegal spending, waste and fraud—and there is nothing that anyone can do about it. It is a tragedy that here we have an able Treasury Minister who will tell us that things are being examined—my hon. Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr. Smith) even made the remarkable suggestion that the European Parliament could examine those activities. But so long as we have mad crazy policies based on artificial prices, nothing can effectively be done. If we found a way of blocking out graft and corruption in our country, another means would be found.

I could mention many cases, but I want to finish my speech quickly because of the pressure of time. I simply hope that Ministers will accept that there is nothing that we can do—that, sadly, the work of the Court of Auditors is wasted, apart from annoying people who read about the graft, corruption, fraud and waste. Nothing whatever can happen. The waste will increase, the fraud will increase and the mountains will increase—unless there is some way in which policy can be changed.

Briefly, in the one minute left to me, I simply add that there is nothing that we can do to change policy. I wish that the Government would accept that. There is no way in which the CAP, for example, can be reformed. We have talked about it year after year. New plans are brought forward all the time. But the same thing always happens. Remember Lady Thatcher's wonderful attempt to spend all the money to wipe out the food mountains and insist on strict budgetary controls? Although the strict controls were there, in the first year of operation the Commission —with the help of ECOFIN and even of a British representative—got round them by declaring a metric year of 10 months to ensure that it kept within the strict budgetary controls.

The tragedy is that Ministers and Members of Parliament are kidding themselves into thinking that there is some bright solution; some new committee or some new fraud department that we could set up. I wish that they would accept the plain fact that nothing can be done. Unfortunately, the organisation of the EC is such that problems tend not to be solved. The CAP is the perfect example.

I hope that, if the hard work of the Court of Auditors and its splendid reports prove anything to anyone, they will prove that we are wasting our time year after year when we say, "We hear that more exciting things are happening in the Commission and in the Council. There are more reports, more checks, and more frauds will be detected." Nothing can be done. Things will get worse, and more costly—and the poor people and the unemployed will suffer. Everyone is suffering. The CAP is one of the greatest scandals and protection rackets in the world. We are doing massive damage to the third world by dumping all the surpluses at artificial prices.

I simply wish that honest, decent Ministers—of which the Paymaster General is certainly one—would stand up

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

and say, "I am sad about this; I think that it is a tragedy and a waste—but the Government and other hon. Members must work out how we can find a way of disengaging from those mad policies and stopping the waste." The only way in which we can stop the scandals and abuses is somehow to pull out from policies that can neve be, and will never be, resolved.

12.9 am

Sir John Cope: I realise that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) thinks that there is no cure for any of the problems discussed this evening or for many other problems except for us to withdraw from the Community as it is now organised. I do not take that view. The problem of agriculture in the third world, to which my hon. Friend referred, would not be improved if we opted out of the EC. Nor am I prepared to agree with his judgment—to which he is entitled—that Ministers or the House should give up and say that the problem is insoluble.

I am not prepared to agree that nothing should be done. I accept that there are difficulties that we need to address and that we need to push our colleagues in the Council of Ministers. I accept that we need to ensure that the machinery of the Community is improved to deal with the problems that we have discussed and to which the report draws attention.

Dr. Godman: Will the Minister give way?

Sir John Cope: No. Many detailed points were raised and I shall try to deal with as many as I can. I shall write to hon. Members about detailed matters raised if necessary. I shall also forward a copy of the *Hansard* report of this evening's debate to Commissioner Schmidhuber, who is responsible for budgetary matters, to draw his attention to the strength of feeling among hon. Members of all parties about aspects of the budget and of its control.

There have been references to the control of finance in this country by the House. The mechanism in which hon. Members have much confidence, as I do, includes the Public Accounts Committee, with which we are all familiar. As hon. Members have rightly said, that mechanism has taken a long time to build up. The history of the Paymaster General's office reveals that some of my predecessors made enormous profits out of the post. From the point of view of my pockets, I am sorry that the traditions of the office have lapsed. For the past 150 years, from before Victorian times, such profits have not been possible for Paymasters General or for other Government officials. Gladstone improved the control mechanisms a good deal, but he did not start the process of tidying up the mess.

I intervened in the speech by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) to explain that the procedure is that the Council, as he rightly described, considers matters initially in detail through the Budget Committee of the Council, which is made up of Treasury or equivalent officials and which makes recommendations to Ministers—that is approximately the state at which we are now in respect of the 1990 report—after which the Council's recommendation is debated by Ministers. When duly passed, it goes on to the European Parliament.

The hon. Member for Newham, South read some extracts from the explanatory memorandum about the Council recommendations. The full Council recommendations run to 59 pages and can also be made available to the House. I know that the hon. Gentleman is extremely assiduous about looking at original documents. The explanatory memorandum is a brief summary, and I am sorry if it did not please him. The recommendations are far longer.

When the recommendations reach the European Parliament, the Court of Auditors' report goes to the Budgetary Control Committee—a different Committee from the Budget Committee—which is the nearest equivalent to the Public Accounts Committee. It starts with the Council's recommendation. In addition, obviously it considers the report of the Court of Auditors —nearly 500 pages—and the Commission's response. The relevant Commissioners give evidence to the Committee about the programmes in which they are interested. It has to decide whether or not to give a discharge, as it is called, to the budget for the year. So there are quite a number of democratic checks inserted in the process.

During the British presidency in the second half of last year, I had the benefit of appearing before the Budgetary Control Committee, something I had not done before. As a representative of the Council and not just of the United Kingdom, I attended meetings to try to explain some matters. Appearing before that Committee was not all that different from appearing before a Select Committee of the House.

The work of the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office is substantially the same as that of the Court of Auditors. The Court has representatives of each member state, including the United Kingdom, obviously. Its job is to go through the detail and to produce a report. It produces not just the annual report but special reports when it considers them necessary.

Additionality and RECHAR were mentioned in the debate. Receipts have always enabled programmes to be higher than they would otherwise have been. There have been changes in the United Kingdom's presentation of receipts of the European regional development fund in the public expenditure figures. They were agreed last year and they will produce greater transparency so that there cannot be accusations such as there have been in the past, and we hope that they will encourage a wider range of applications, helping to increase value for money. The Commission accepts that full provision has been made for RECHAR receipts——

It being one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business).*

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I have decided to ask for an investigation of the delay in the No Lobby.

The House divided: Ayes 95, Noes 19.

Division No. 192] **[12.17 am**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Alexander, Richard	Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Alton, David	Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Amess, David	Bates, Michael
Arbuthnot, James	Blackburn, Dr John G.

Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Freeman, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Hague, William
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jack, Michael
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
Malone, Gerald
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Page, Richard
Patnick, Irvine
Redwood, John
Richards, Rod
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Sproat, Iain
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Thomason, Roy
Thurnham, Peter
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Waterson, Nigel
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'f'ld)*
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope and
Mr. Robert C. Hughes.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Connarty, Michael
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Davidson, Ian
Dixon, Don
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Jamieson, David
Kilfoyle, Peter
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Meale, Alan
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Jimmy Hood.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the Court of Auditors' Report concerning the financial year 1991 together with the institutions' replies (OJ No. C330, Volume 35) and the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 25th February 1993 relating to the draft Council Recommendation to the European Parliament on the discharge of the General Budget of the European Communities for the financial year 1991.

Plymouth Development Corporation

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Plymouth Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1993, dated 20th January 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th January, be approved.—*[Mr. Redwood.]*

12.33 am

Mr. Doug Henderson (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I am grateful for the unexpected opportunity properly to open the debate. I thought that the Minister might have taken the opportunity, with such a full House, to put a strong case for the establishment of an urban development corporation in Plymouth. I thought that he and many of his hon. Friends would have considered it an important contribution to economic development, not only for Plymouth but for the south-west. An explanation of the Government's policy on urban and economic regeneration would have been helpful. He could have commented on the work of other urban development corporations since their establishment in 1981.

As the Minister knows, there has not been complete unanimity, even among Conservative Members, about the establishment of such organisations. It was not that hon. Members believed that the establishment of urban development corporations could have damaged economic development in those areas, but that more effort could have been made towards regeneration had they been designed differently.

Following his appointment as the Government's ambassador to Tyne and Wear—my own area—the Minister will be aware of the different views on the establishment of urban development corporations throughout the north-east. It is pleasing to see hon. Members representing constituencies in the north-east in their places tonight; perhaps they will participate in the debate.

The Minister will also know that there are different views on the success of those urban development corporations. I would have thought that he would want to itemise at least some of their strengths, and acknowledge some of the weaknesses that have been apparent not only to those who take a close interest in the work of the development corporations but to others whose work in the community has been affected—in the business community, the voluntary sector or other sectors. I hoped that the Minister would have made a stronger case than simply formally moving the resolution.

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): It is for the convenience of the House at this late hour if I reply at the end of the debate to points that have been raised, if I catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If the hon. Gentleman has serious questions to ask, I will answer them, but had he known a little more about Plymouth, he might have known that the Labour-controlled city council is keen on the proposal and is looking to the hon. Gentleman and his Friends to expedite the business and vote for the motion.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to the Minister for reminding the House that the Government were persuaded to establish an urban development corporation in Plymouth by the Labour-controlled council, which recognised the terrible state of the economy in that city and

[Mr. Henderson]

the need to do something to start regeneration. I assure the House that the Opposition are not attempting to delay the establishment of the urban development corporation.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Is there not a certain arrogant and sinister attitude on the part of the Minister, who has been given powers to introduce an order defining an area and giving it advantages over other areas? It is an important power, granted by primary legislation in the House. The order is not subject to amendment; we have to take it or leave it. It is subject to a maximum time of one and a half hours, and the Minister did not even have the courtesy to explain what governed the issue of the order and outline the powers that he is using.

It is an example of the overweening arrogance of a Government who, in 1992, turned out more statutory instruments than any Government in the history of Parliament. It is an arrogant use of power by the Government, who are piling on more regulations, the most unaccountable part of our parliamentary democracy, than any previous Government.

Mr. Henderson: I understand my hon. Friend's concerns, and I am glad that he has brought them to our attention, not only in regard to the issues we are discussing tonight but, as he rightly points out, on a number of other issues where shortened parliamentary procedures have been adopted in preference to a full debate.

The Opposition make no attempt to delay the establishment of the urban development corporation. Somewhat cynically, the Government announced their intention to establish such a body in the run up to the general election, and there has been much criticism in Plymouth of the fact that it has now taken nearly 12 months for the Government to lay an order in the House to that effect. If there are any criticisms about delay, the Government should remember their apparent difficulties in introducing the measure.

Our purpose in praying against the order was to enable a full debate to take place in the Chamber, albeit in an hour and a half, on developments in the dockyards in Plymouth and the linked issues of economic development throughout that city and its travel-to-work area.

I would argue—I hope that my case convinces at least some hon. Members—that, if the important aim of regenerating the dockland and the travel-to-work areas in Plymouth is to be achieved, it must be done in the context of the economic development of the whole of the south-west region. People in that part of the country recognise the absolute importance of Plymouth as a major centre, which encompasses a significant proportion of the population, the economic activity and the potential economic activity in the south-west. They recognise that, if Plymouth does well, the whole of the south-west does well.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I very much welcome the hon. Gentleman's new-found concern for the welfare of the south-west. Is he saying, with the authority of an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, that he is in favour of the contract for the refitting and overhaul of Trident going to Devonport rather than Rosyth? Is that the Opposition's view? If so, we welcome it.

Mr. Henderson: I rather suspected that that matter would be raised by Conservative Members. I have already had some discussions today on that matter, in another forum. The policy of the Labour party is that the refitting of Trident is of such strategic importance that a country such as Britain requires options. That means that a capability must be retained in both Rosyth and Plymouth, so that Britain can properly maintain its armed forces. Opposition defence spokespersons have made that position quite clear, and I reiterate it this evening.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): Is the hon. Gentleman really saying that it is Labour party policy to have a nuclear capability in both Rosyth and Devonport to maintain a Trident boat? Has he any idea what the cost of that would be?

Mr. Henderson: The hon. Gentleman has not considered what has been happening previously with the refitting of important MOD vessels. Maintaining a Trident submarine does not occupy all the work of any particular yard. What I am saying, and what those involved in shipbuilding and ship repair recognise, is that a yard in the modern world must have a greater flexibility than has been the case with some yards.

Some yards in the north of England may suffer because of their over-concentration on one form of naval refit. Given a joint capability between Rosyth and Devonport, into that can be built a capability to undertake other important work for the MOD. I am sure that those who work in the dockyards at both Devonport and Rosyth will welcome the Labour party's position.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): Rather than discussing the Labour party's view on the nuclear refit contract, what we should be discussing—and what I thought Conservative Members would have raised—is the Government's procrastination and delay with the contract. Indeed, Conservative Members have often said that the Government have subjected the contract to delay. That delay is harming the economic future of the area.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising an important point that concerns people both in the dockyard and in the whole of the Plymouth community.

The reason for the order is that the Government recognise that, even if the refitting of Trident goes to Devonport, there will still not be sufficient employment to regenerate the dockland and the wider economic areas of Plymouth, and that further action is required. Indeed, when the Minister replies, he may argue that a UDC is a proper way to proceed.

I hope to establish that the UDC acting alone would be insufficient to achieve adequate urban regeneration in Plymouth, a city which has served the nation well. If my history is reasonably accurate, it has served the country from Elizabethan times, and perhaps before, through two world wars to the present. It is regrettable, however, that the city has fallen on hard times. There has been a serious decline in naval dockyard work and the work force in the yard has been halved over the past five years. The consequences of the recession in the United Kingdom generally, and in the south-west particularly, have been felt deeply in Plymouth during recent years. There is much evidence to confirm the difficulties that the city faces.

In the past, it would have been extremely surprising to find Plymouth high on the list of cities and urban areas qualifying for urban aid. Unfortunately, that is now the reality, and that fact reflects the difficulties that the city faces. Since the late 1980s, Plymouth has been eligible for urban aid. Unemployment is 13·4 per cent., which is damaging for such a city. It is similar to the levels of unemployment that are to be found in areas in the north of the country, which have traditionally suffered from the difficulties of economic degeneration.

In the Plymouth, Sutton constituency, which covers part of the area in which the proposed UDC will be employed, unemployment has increased by 104 per cent. over the past three years.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is my hon. Friend aware that, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) I went to Plymouth several times in the late 1980s as a member of the Public Accounts Committee? That stemmed from work that we had been doing as members of the Committee on the contractorisation of management in the dockyard. We were able to predict the immense damage that would be done to the yard by the arrangements that the Government were introducing. When I went to Plymouth, everyone recognised that it was inevitable that there would be major redundancies. Plymouth then was not in a position to deal with the problems that were to confront it in the future. Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to comment on that.

Mr. Henderson: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has raised the matter. A point which has been made forcefully to me over the past three years, during which I have made numerous visits to the south-west, including Plymouth, is that, when contractorisation or privatisation is under way, there is concern only with work which existed in the past or, at the very best, which currently exists. It seems that no one is concerned with how work will be created or generated in future. That is because very few will have a stake in that work, and that is one of the great weaknesses of privatisation. That has been felt deeply by the work force at the dockyard at Plymouth.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: When the Government were considering contractorisation, there was an argument in Plymouth about the nature and nationality of the company that was being considered for the contract. This was many years ago, but there was a great deal of argument about Brown and Root. It was felt that, because it was not a British company, it would never understand the dilemma of running a management system that would lead to unemployment. It was felt that the fact that it was not a British company would detract from its ability to secure the future of the yard.

I think that events have proved that correct. Once that contractor came in, it was the beginning of the end for the city. Over the years, many have complained about what happened.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. If I had more time, I would make it clear that I do not take a narrow nationalistic view of economic development or even economic ownership. There are occasions when that can be an advantage, as some of my hon. Friends from Sunderland have acknowledged. But there are instances where ownership is transferred to a foreign source—foreign to a particular area, not necessarily foreign in a nationality sense—which means that is has less of a commitment to the traditions and future prosperity of an area.

If my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) manages to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he may wish to comment further on that point, which I am sure a number of his constituents will have made to him.

As the Minister said in an intervention, the Labour-controlled city council in Plymouth supports the establishment of the urban development corporation. The Opposition also support it. But there is concern about the delay in establishing the body. As unemployment in, and the economy of, the Plymouth area continue to deteriorate relentlessly, there is no way in which that damage can be redressed. The delay in establishing the development corporation has further weakened the ability of the Plymouth economy to tackle the problems it faces and to begin regeneration.

I also welcome the close liaison between the local authority and the Department of the Environment on the analysis of the problems that face Plymouth—the urban degeneration that has taken place in recent times and the need to work together to try to establish a basis for future prosperity.

It is important that there is that consensus, so that often unnecessary disputes about planning and the location and nature of particular developments, which has often occurred in other urban development corporations where there has not been such a consensus, can be avoided and the best use made of limited resources. That can happen when planning priorities are agreed.

I welcome the change in the Government's position and their recognition of the increasing need to work closely with a local authority on any development schemes in our urban areas. The commitment given by the local authority in Plymouth augurs well for success in future if other conditions, which I hope to mention later, are met.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: My hon. Friend talks about the willingness to work together, but we have a reference in the explanatory note to eight members, in addition to the chairman and deputy chairman. Has my hon. Friend any information on how those eight members will be selected? Will they be representatives of the local authority——

Mr. Redwood: Yes.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why did not the Minister make a speech setting out such matters, instead of moving the motion formally so that hon. Members would not have to intervene to secure the facts? My hon. Friend might be able to help me.

Mr. Henderson: I can help my hon. Friend. I have been advised by the local authority that it has some concord with the Government on the way in which the board will be established. I am not sure whether it agrees 100 per cent. with the Government's proposal on board membership. I understand that a chairman has still to be found. However, the Minister may be able to announce this evening that that problem has been overcome. The local authority has, to some degree, accepted the structure of the board, and I think that it hopes to participate in it.

Mr. Streeter: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the hostility shown this evening by Opposition Members

[Mr. Streeter]

towards the Plymouth UDC, particularly expressed by the hon. Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), will be noticed in Plymouth and not forgotten? The hon. Gentleman should take that on board.

Mr. Henderson: I had hoped that interventions would be helpful, but the hon. Gentleman's comment was not. I listened carefully to the remarks of my hon. Friends the Members for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer). They were testing the issue, in the hope that the Minister, when he winds up, would meet some of the points that they raised and which are important to the people of Plymouth. The hon. Gentleman must get it firmly in his mind that the Labour party will take no lessons on urban regeneration from the Conservative party. I reaffirm, and made it unequivocally clear, that we support measures to support and stimulate economic regeneration—particularly in rundown city areas, including those of Plymouth.

Mr. Jamieson: My hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) visited Plymouth with me in 1986, and I was grateful to him for his support for the local economy. I wonder how many Conservative Members can say that they visited Plymouth dockyard in 1986 or earlier, and expressed great concern for its future and for that of Plymouth, and predicted many of the difficulties that Plymouth now faces.

Mr. Henderson: I am again grateful to my hon. Friend, who reinforces a point that I tried to make. The people of Plymouth know the truth of my hon. Friend's remarks, and they showed, in the way that they expressed their preference at the last general election, whom they trust with the area's development.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Perhaps I may clarify my position in the light of earlier interventions. As a Labour Member of Parliament, I have no difficulty accepting the development corporation. In fact, I positively support the principle. However, we are debating the scrutiny of legislation.

The people of Plymouth will want to know that Parliament has considered the implications. We have no difficulty with the proposition—I hope that the proposal will deal with the problems of Plymouth, and certainly those that I identified when I visited it with my hon. Friend some years ago. I wish the people of Plymouth the very best of good luck with the proposal.

Mr. Henderson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his further intervention, which made clear the point that he intended to make clear earlier. My hon. Friend has stated his firm commitment to the people of Plymouth and to their need to develop their economy.

The Labour party supports the urban development corporation's establishment, but I have certain worries —which I have expressed on other occasions, in relation to the Urban Regeneration Agency that the Government hope, with the approval of another place, to establish shortly, linked to the activities of urban development corporations throughout the country.

My first concern relates to resources. I invite the House to compare the proposed level of resources for Plymouth development corporation, totalling £45 milion over five years, with the amount of public money that has been injected into Plymouth in the past, one way or another, in defence work or contracts. The sum of £45 million over five years is fairly small by comparison.

I make a comparison also with the amount of development money given to Wales. South Wales and south-west England have populations of similar size. Next year, the Welsh Development Agency will receive from the public purse £171 million for one year. That compares with £9 million for the Plymouth development corporation, and puts the Government's commitment into perspective.

I hope that the Government will have further thoughts about development in the south-west of England. If a strong case can be made for economic development stimulated by public finance in south Wales, where unemployment is 10·4 per cent., surely a similar argument can be advanced for the economic regeneration of the south-west of England, with a similar population and unemployment of over 10 per cent.

Notwithstanding what the Minister has said in our debates about the establishment of an Urban Regeneration Agency, perhaps he will recognise that, although urban development corporations can be of some value in tackling the specific problems of particular areas, if there is to be an overall economic regeneration, it is important that the whole region is on the way up and receives a stimulus. That cannot possibly be achieved through the efforts of the UDC, which has neither the powers nor the resources to tackle the problem.

The Minister should realise that what is really required for the economic regeneration of the south-west—and the full economic regeneration of Plymouth—is the establishment of a regional development agency similar to those established in both Wales and Scotland. That proposition carries wide support across the political divide in the south-west.

If the Government are serious about economic regeneration in Plymouth and the south-west, they should consider how the work of the proposed urban development corporation could be incorporated in the overall work that would be co-ordinated and undertaken by a development agency in the south-west. The establishment of such an agency was a firm Labour commitment at the last general election, and continues to be so: we recognise the importance of such bodies.

I hope that, in establishing the development agency, the Government will be able to build on the strengths that have been identified in the structures and work of UDCs in other parts of the country, and that they will recognise the failures of other development corporations.

The House recently debated the effectiveness of a UDC established in the east end of London, and a fairly wide argument has been conducted among all sorts of people involved in the question of urban regeneration and the best way in which it can be achieved. It has been alleged that the failures of the London dockland development corporation resulted largely from the adoption of an excessively narrow approach, based on the philosophy that, if a new property development is established, some use will have to be made of that development, and that there will be a trickle-down effect which will regenerate a wider area, incorporating the people who live in the area and providing them with work.

As the Minister well knows, the evidence of what has actually happened in docklands completely contradicts

what was intended to happen. Docklands has been a complete failure, and many of its main projects have become white elephants. The classic example is Canary Wharf, an under-utilised property development which has done very little to regenerate the economy of that part of east London and very little to provide employment for people who were previously employed in the area and have lost their jobs, partly through the clearance of the area to provide an opportunity for property development. It has also done very little to incorporate the local community into the work of Canary Wharf: indeed, the project is not supported by the community.

As a result, only 15 per cent. of the Canary Wharf building is now occupied; 85 per cent. is redundant, with little prospect of reaching its full capacity in the near future. Of the three major companies that have taken a stake in Canary Wharf, one is the developer, which has used it as a base for its administration. The last thing that Plymouth needs is its own empty Canary Wharf overlooking Plymouth Sound. What Plymouth needs is an integrated project to regenerate this area.

The Minister will already have heard some of the arguments. They have not been put forward on a narrow, partisan, party political basis. My argument about the failure of property-led development has been put to the Minister by the developers upon whom he has to rely if there is to be any prospect of development in Plymouth. It is an argument that has been put to him by developers, development consultants, local businesses, the British Urban Regeneration Association and by the Minister's economic advisers, such as Professor Robson at Manchester university and Mr. Nigel Smith, a property consultant with Drivers Jonas.

Many others have also made the point forcefully to the Government: that there can be no proper economic development if we rely completely on property development, and that there have to be other forms of integrated development. That is what Plymouth and other parts of the country need.

Plymouth needs wider power to enable it to support the work of an urban development corporation that can be integrated into the structure of a development agency. I refer, for example, to the power to develop infrastructure that covers a wider area than that covered by the urban development corporation—to transport facilities and other utilities for the city of Plymouth. Wider powers are needed to enable aid and grant to be given to companies that need it, whether they are involved in engineering, shipbuilding, or other sectors of the economy. Powers are required to enable industrial promotion to take place. Powers are needed to provide marketing opportunities and business advice—all the things that are done by the Welsh Development Agency.

Those hon. Members who represent constituencies in the south-west may be unaware of Lord Walker's view. He has been appointed chairman of the Urban Regeneration Agency, which is to cover the rest of England, including the south-west. When Lord Walker was a Member of this House and Secretary of State for Wales, he recognised the importance of development agencies. In his autobiography, "Staying Power", he said:

"We calculated that by creating new businesses, helping existing companies to grow and attracting inward investment to Britain from overseas we could bring down unemployment to the lowest figure in England."

He was talking about Wales at that point.

"I quickly realised that my best instrument for achieving all this was the Welsh Development Agency. It was flexible, could help with the property side, offer grants in line with the EEC rules. I gave it more money"—

he says proudly—

"to expand the job."

That is what Lord Walker says is necessary for Wales.

Some of Lord Walker's wisdom surely applies to the problems of the south-west of England. A regional development agency is needed to reinforce the work that can be conducted on a narrower geographical base by the urban development corporation.

I hope that the Minister will reflect on the arguments for urban regeneration that he has heard from many hon. Members since he assumed this responsibility nearly 12 months ago. He will hear other hon. Members say that it is crucial for the urban development corporation to have the resources that it needs if it is to make an impact on Plymouth's economy. Those resources must be comparable to those that are available for urban development in, for instance, south Wales.

There is a need for close liaison between Government Departments so that one Department is not running in one direction and another Department in a different direction. There is already some strain between the interests of the Ministry of Defence and those of the Department of the Environment over the establishment of the agency.

It is important that there should be no further delay in the establishment of the body. There is a need for the close liaison, which has been established with the council—a fact I welcome—to continue. Local people must be fully involved in any decisions made, and I hope that the Minister will agree that monitoring committees should be established where development work covers a very small area.

Many strengths have been identified in urban development corporations in other parts of the country, and I am sure that hon. Members will bring them to the Minister's attention. I hope that, in establishing the development corporation in Plymouth, the Minister will be able to incorporate the best practices and that he will recognise the forceful arguments made by virtually everyone involved in urban redevelopment. It cannot be undertaken successfully on a narrow basis—it cannot be undertaken if the basis of urban regeneration is property development alone. There is a need for a fully integrated approach, so that jobs have as important a role as property development.

1.10 am

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I welcome the opportunity to take part in an important debate about the Plymouth development corporation. Although the hour is late, it is never too late to put the case for Plymouth.

I was not impressed by or pleased with the grudging welcome given by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) to this important urban development corporation, which is greatly welcomed in Plymouth, even by the Labour-led city council. It is typical of the Labour party to put forward someone from the north-east to talk about an urban development corporation in the south-west, two areas about as far apart as they could be. The hon. Gentleman displayed a lack of knowledge of Plymouth, and of the Royal William yard in particular, by comparing it to Canary Wharf. There is

[Mr. Gary Streeter]

absolutely no comparison. It is unfortunate that the hon. Gentleman displayed such a lack of knowledge and did not see fit to welcome an exciting proposal.

The motion is the final parliamentary step of the Plymouth development corporation becoming a reality. We look forward with great excitement to 1 April when it will be up and running. I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities for his personal effort in causing this day to arrive, as there was a danger in the autumn statement that the £45 million for Plymouth might disappear. We would have understood, but my hon. Friend fought diligently for the city. On 26 March, he is to speak at a conference in Plymouth; I can assure him not just of a warm welcome but of a hero's welcome. If he carries on in the same way, a statue will be erected to him on the Hoe, alongside that of Sir Francis Drake.

I wish to put the urban development corporation in context. The south-west is suffering from the effects of the recession. It has three traditional industries: agriculture, tourism and a defence-related industry.

Mr. Harris (St. Ives): And fishing.

Mr. Streeter: My hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) reminds me that we also have a vital fishing industry, which he diligently protects at every opportunity. For different reasons, all those industries are experiencing difficulty. In that context, the UDC is very welcome.

We must also understand that Plymouth suffers from peripherality. It is more than 120 miles from any larger city. That cannot be said about any place other than London. It means that, in times of difficulty, no other industries are waiting to move to our part of the world.

I am delighted that the Minister has acknowledged that Plymouth is a special case. The creation of the UDC is also a reflection of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's commitment to the south-west. It is good to see the commitment of which he speaks becoming a reality and taking concrete form tonight.

As has already been said, Plymouth has suffered from a rundown of the dockyard since 1985. We have lost 8,000 jobs in that period and unemployment now stands at roughly 14 per cent. It is also true, as I have often said in the House, that we are suffering from the uncertainty about the outcome of the Trident contract—if my voice is a little croaky, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is caused by the excitement of the hour. It is critical for our city that Plymouth be chosen for the work. We can do it well and cost-effectively, at a price that other parts of the country cannot match. I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North has not been able to confirm clearly to the House tonight that it is Labour party policy for the Trident contract to come to Plymouth. That will be noted in Plymouth.

Mr. Jamieson: Does the hon. Gentleman share my abject disappointment at the constant delay and change in dates for the announcement of the nuclear refit contract?

Mr. Streeter: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) for intervening in the debate. He knows only too well that it is my commitment to my constituents that I shall fight for them at every opportunity. Of course, the frustration that we have suffered in Plymouth at the delay in awarding the contract is a matter for concern.

Because we are in difficulty, we welcome the urban development corporation all the more. I see the corporation as the cavalry coming over the hill—£45 million over five years is a substantial sum in anyone's book. I believe that it will be a catalyst for change and progress in Plymouth. It will be a pump-priming exercise that will attract private sector investment. The Minister is already aware of the private sector activity in Plymouth which, in combination with the local authority, has already set up a company to shadow the corporation and incur some of the early expenditure so that time is not lost. I hope that the pump-priming exercise will produce jobs for the people of Plymouth. That is what our young people want—and I believe that the £45 million will be a catalyst, a springboard and a turning point which will lead to the creation of jobs for the people of Plymouth. That is why I welcome it so much.

Now I shall go into one or two details concerning the areas involved in the UDC. First, I hope that the Mount Wise area will be used primarily for development to raise extra cash for the other flagship facilities. The Royal William yard will be the flagship of the development, and the challenge for the board of the UDC will be to produce the right solution—the right scheme, which will be lively and attract inward investment.

The third area—RAF Mount Batten, in my constituency—must be kept for recreation. The people of Turnchapel, who live around the area, want it to be left as an open space for recreation, where the people of Plymouth can come and walk and enjoy the beautiful scenery and the beautiful sea. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to confirm that he will bring every pressure to bear on the board to listen to the voice of local people.

My hon. Friend may be aware that I attended a meeting of the Turnchapel residents and preservation association last Friday, and heard people's concerns about RAF Mount Batten. I pledged to them—I repeat that pledge tonight—that a month or so after the UDC is set up I will arrange a meeting between the residents of Turnchapel and the board so that the board, too, can hear the concerns of local people. That is what we want in Plymouth, and I am sure that the Minister will be able to give us assurances.

In replying to the debate, will my hon. Friend the Minister also confirm that one of the priorities for the board should be to ensure that local workers are engaged in any development work? Will he confirm that, as far as possible, local contractors will be engaged to do up the properties, for example, so that local people can enjoy the benefits?

One of the Labour party's many failings is that it does not welcome good news. It delights in talking things down, whether in the country generally or in Plymouth. Plymouth has gone through a difficult patch. We have real needs, of which the most pressing is the need for jobs. Today's move is welcome because it will lead to the creation of further jobs. Some Opposition Members talk down Plymouth, but with this Government's assistance it can be a boom town of the 21st century. It has so many things going for it: the attractive environment, the facilities that it affords, an excellent and skilled work force—[HON. MEMBERS: "An excellent Member of Parliament."] My hon. Friends are kind to refer to the representation that Plymouth, Drake and Plymouth, Sutton enjoy. I welcome

the order. It is an important turning point for the city of Plymouth. It is to be welcomed widely in the House and I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his efforts in making it a reality.

1.20 am

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I too am pleased that the debate is taking place tonight and that it gives us the opportunity to discuss Plymouth and the economic needs of the south-west. Unlike the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), I shall not congratulate the Minister on his comments. I shall wait until I hear them before congratulating him on them. I may do so when the debate has finished.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) for his comments of support this evening. I would not sneer at any hon. Member who spoke as warmly in favour of Plymouth as my hon. Friend has done tonight, wherever he came from.

To reinforce the point, I am also grateful to my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) for his support over the years. He came to the dockyard many years ago and spoke to the work force, to the unions, to me and to others. He spoke warmly in favour of the work force. He accurately predicted what has now come to pass—that we should lose many jobs. The only way in which he was wrong was that he underestimated the number of jobs that would be lost. He was accused of scaremongering.

The development corporation proposal for Plymouth is to be welcomed. The proposal was first mooted way back in 1985. The hon. Member for Sutton said that he wanted to erect a statue in the Minister's honour. If we do erect a statue and if progress is made at the same rate as the announcement of the development corporation, the Minister will be drawing his pension before we see the unveiling of the statue. He can come to my constituency, in which the dockyard lies, and I shall be happy to unveil the statue.

It was in 1985 that the Secretary of State for Defence announced the release of the Royal William yard because it was surplus to requirements. It has taken us eight years to get to where we are now. The proposal has, like so many other proposals, been subjected to prevarication and delay. There has been little action over the years, and it has been very slow. My regret is that, during that time, the buildings that are owned by the Ministry of Defence have fallen further into decline and decay.

We now welcome the proposal for the Royal William yard, for Mount Batten and for Mount Wise, the three areas that we are discussing. There are many other areas of urban decay in Plymouth that need to be addressed. Many of those areas were outlined in the bid that Plymouth made last year for city challenge which, I regret to say, was unsuccessful.

Mr. Streeter: Before the hon. Gentleman sits down, because I am sure that he is drawing to the end of his remarks, can he say whether the city has welcomed the £1·8 million from the urban partnership fund for which my hon. Friend the Minister is also responsible? Is not that substantial compensation for us not getting the city challenge bid?

Mr. Jamieson: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comment about the length of my speech—a triumph of optimism over reality. We welcome any amounts that come to the city, small and late though they may be.

In a way, the south-west has suffered from having too good an image, which has concealed many of its problems. It is seen very much as a holiday and tourist area. Important and vital though that part of the economy is, we need more than that to survive. Over the years, Plymouth has needed more to survive.

For many years, Plymouth has been dependent on manufacturing industry, which has been linked almost exclusively to defence. The old town of Devonport in my constituency did not exist when Plymouth dock came to the area. The dockyard came first, in 1691, and the people were housed in hulks out in the sound. Later the town was built around the dockyard. So the dockyard came first and the people followed.

The whole south-west is dependent on defence-related industry. I believe that it is the most defence-dependent region in the whole EC. In the Plymouth travel-to-work area there is a total of 25,000 defence-dependent jobs or 21 per cent. of the work force. A survey by Bristol polytechnic in May 1991 estimated that in the whole south-west region 155,000 jobs were dependent directly or indirectly on defence.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Having told the House how important the defence industry is to his area, will the hon. Gentleman say whether he supports Labour party policy to reduce defence expenditure by £6 billion, which would probably have a massive jobs impact on his area?

Mr. Jamieson: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has brought a sour note of party politics into a debate about Plymouth. My constituents have suffered for many years from Tory defence cuts. There is over 50 per cent. male unemployment in my constituency due to cuts by the Government which he supports.

Total expenditure on defence in the region is £3·38 billion per year, which is 18·8 per cent. of United Kingdom defence expenditure. Recent world events and the volatile profile of defence expenditure prove that there will be more changes in defence needs in our area. In my constituency in the 1970s over 20,000 people were employed in the dockyard. In 1986 and 1987, when my hon. Friend the Member for Workington visited the dockyard, nearly 13,000 people were employed there. There are now just over 5,000.

Constituencies in the region are suffering very much because of unemployment. In my constituency there has been a 77 per cent. rise in unemployment over the last three years. The hon. Member for Sutton quoted the rise in his constituency as 104 per cent. In other areas, such as Barnstaple, Redruth, Camborne and Torbay, there is great concern about the state of the economy. If the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe) were here, he could tell us that there has been an 82 per cent. increase in unemployment in his area. If the hon. Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) were here, she could tell us that the increase in unemployment in her area is 139 per cent.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that we are talking about the urban development corporation and that the Labour party

[Mr. Michael Bates]

strenuously opposed its establishment? Is he aware that a primary function of the urban development corporation is to sell the benefits of the city and attract inward investment? For the sake of Plymouth, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not play any part in the work of the urban development corporation, because that would not attract many people to the area.

Mr. Jamieson: I find it tiresome when hon. Members who probably do not know where Plymouth is intervene in this debate. When I met my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North the other day, he surprised me with his detailed knowledge of many roads and streets in my constituency. He probably knows my constituency much better than many of the Conservative Members who are gasping at present.

This order is a positive move forward. There have been some positive moves forward recently. Devonport Management Ltd. has done some limited work on diversification and is now repairing railway locomotive engines. At present, repairs are being made to privately owned ships in our dockyard. On Friday, I shall be visiting another company in the dockyard, Walker Wingsail, which has done excellent work in creating new jobs within the dockyard; but that work is limited and only a few jobs have been created.

I am glad that the Minister referred to Plymouth city council. In the past 18 months, that council has done more work than anyone to assist the economic regeneration in the area. It has been pro-active in helping the economy and has created co-operation among business, industry and commerce, the like of which we have not had for many years. The council must be heartily congratulated on that.

The hon. Member for Sutton will recall attending a presentation with me at which he congratulated the council on its Plymouth city challenge bid. The hon. Gentleman must admit that it was an excellent bid for the city.

The urban development corporation will provide £45 million. I hope that the Minister will tell us that that is simply the first step down the road for Plymouth and the south-west. It will take much more than putting right buildings and the decay which has taken place over many years in the areas to which I referred to bring back the number of jobs to Plymouth and the south-west which is required. I hope that the Minister will tell us that he will urgently appoint the chairman, the chief executive and the rest of the board.

I hope that not only will the board be set up urgently but that the jobs which are created in the first instance will go to people in Plymouth and the surrounding areas where the developments are to take place. In the past, those people were traditionally employed in those areas and they lost their jobs. In the constituencies of the hon. Member for Sutton and of the hon. Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes), and in my constituency, there are some depressing areas of unemployment. In some areas, male unemployment is more than 50 per cent. It is a serious situation. I hope that those unemployed people will be the first to find jobs.

I hope that this order is the first step down the road and that the Minister will tell us that he has further plans for the use of the buildings, the growth of the urban development corporation and more funding. I hope that we will see an announcement of the establishment of a regional development agency which will not only embrace the difficulties and problems in Plymouth. I hope that we can look forward to not only the redevelopment of Plymouth but to the much wider development of the whole of the south-west.

1.33 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am pleased that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) found the visit of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) of some assistance. I wish that I could report such a happy experience in my constituency. When the hon. Member for Workington came to Hale in my constituency, he held up a development which has still not taken place. The hon. Gentleman was aided and abetted by the Liberal Democrat chairman of the city council planning committee. That visit held up the development and destroyed the prospect of jobs.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: I do not even know of the existence of the place that I am alleged to have visited—perhaps the hon. Gentleman has the wrong one.

Mr. Harris: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman—I thought that he did. I am sorry about that; I am attributing to the hon. Gentleman even more mischief than he usually makes around the country. It must have been one of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues of like-minded intent. I wholeheartedly withdraw the remark.

My credentials—if I have any for this debate—are that for five years I had the privilege of representing Plymouth, albeit after Cornwall, in the European Parliament as the Member for Cornwall and Plymouth. In those days the Devonport dockyard was much larger, as the hon. Member for Devonport said, but the writing was on the wall for maintaining a dockyard of that size and that number of employees. It was clear——

Mr. Jamieson: It was not.

Mr. Harris: The hon. Member for Devonport says that it was not, but it was. It was recognised in the city at that time that a dockyard of that size could not be maintained. All that has happened since then has borne that out, partly because of this country's shrinking defence capacity.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), I was disappointed by the response of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) to the central issue of which dockyard would have the role of refitting Trident. Despite the hon. Gentleman's attempt to fudge the issue, it is clear that Devonport and Rosyth cannot both service Trident. If the hon. Gentleman is now saying that it is Labour party policy that the refitting work on Trident should go to both dockyards, I will give way to let him make that position clear.

Mr. Jamieson: Give us the Government policy.

Mr. Harris: The Government policy is a two-yard solution, but not—as I understand it—to have both yards servicing Trident. If that is the Labour party's policy, I am more than happy to sit down and let the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North clarify the position.

Mr. Henderson: I did not wish to take up any more of the time of the House. I thought that I had already clarified our position. The Labour party's policy is clear: there is a

need to maintain options because of the strategic importance of Trident, which means the maintenance of both Rosyth and Plymouth. Both must have the capability of dealing with Trident, but they will clearly have to attract other work to make themselves viable in a wider context.

Mr. Harris: I do not want to labour the issue, but I still do not think that the hon. Gentleman has answered the central point as to whether he believes that both dockyards can share the work of servicing Trident. I do not believe for one minute that they can. I therefore say unhesitatingly that the dockyard best equipped to carry out that function is Devonport. That must be the conclusion of any independent survey of the matter.

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): As I am an independent person, I am sure that my hon. Friend would not expect me to stay seated having heard his comment. He must accept that both yards will put in a case for winning the contract. I am sure that my hon. Friend would want there to be fair battle between the two. That is why the decision has been delayed. I am sure that Rosyth will win the contract.

Mr. Harris: I accept everything that my hon. Friend has said, except his last point. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton said, we should have a fair fight. I am sure that the result will be that Devonport will win. However, let us move on from that contentious issue——*[Interruption.]* I am being goaded to attack the Liberal Democrats, but I will not do that.

I agree with some of what the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North said. All the parties in the south-west, including the Liberal Democrats, agree that we need some form of development agency which can operate more widely than the urban development corporation proposed for Plymouth. Devon and Cornwall need their own development agency and the funds and the means to compete against the unfair competition from Wales and the Welsh Development Agency. I endorse what the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North said about that.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton, I would not like it to go out from the debate that somehow Plymouth, with all its difficulties, is in a hopeless position, because it is not. Plymouth has marvellous advantages. It is a vibrant and confident city, and from the time of Drake it has always looked outwards. Although in the past it has had an unhealthy over-reliance on the dockyard, in recent years it has gone a long way to try to correct that dependence.

In my five years as a Euro-MP, there was inward investment in industrial estates such as Estover. Firms incorporating modern technology came to the modern factories on those estates. I speak not just as a former Member of the European Parliament for Cornwall and Plymouth but as the Member of this Parliament for a Cornish constituency, albeit the one furthest from Plymouth.

The prosperity of parts of Cornwall is greatly bound up with the prosperity or otherwise of Plymouth and we have a vested interest, albeit an indirect one, in what happens there. What is good for Plymouth is certainly good for the parts of Cornwall that surround it. I have no doubt that the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Taylor) will agree on that. The wife of my hon. Friend the Member for Cornwall, South-East (Mr. Hicks) is recovering from a serious operation, which is why my hon. Friend is not present for the debate, but he would also agree, because a large number of his constituents work in Plymouth, many of them in the dockyard.

I wish Plymouth well. I am sure that the corporation will benefit not only Plymouth but Cornwall, especially south-east Cornwall. In the context of confidence, we must look to the strengths of Plymouth, one of which is the transformation of its polytechnic to a university. That is another asset, not just for Plymouth but for a wider area. I heartily welcome the Government's action, which will benefit not just Plymouth but Cornwall and the south-west.

1.44 am

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I shall be as brief as I possibly can.

It is of considerable importance to the economy of Devon and Cornwall that Plymouth is given this new lease of life. It is unfortunate that there has been an acrimonious tinge to tonight's debate, because in recent months there has been all-party support on many issues affecting Plymouth and the economy of Devon and Cornwall and I regret that to some extent that has dissolved this evening.

My constituents and those of my hon. Friends the Members for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) and for Truro (Mr. Taylor) are directly and indirectly affected by what happens to the dockyard and to the wider economy of the city of Plymouth. It is estimated that some 30,000 jobs will be at risk if the dockyard goes down. It is part of the engine of recovery for a vulnerable economy with bad unemployment that the city should receive all the help that it can get.

My constituency has two of the top 10 unemployment black spots in the United Kingdom. We travel from the constituency to get jobs wherever we can—I suppose that that is why I come here.

Cornwall is highly dependent on defence-related industries, which affect not only the south-east of the county, as the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) pointed out. Some 4·5 per cent. of the Cornish gross domestic product is dependent on defence-related industries, and the south-west's research centres demonstrate that 5 per cent. of the total of Devon and Cornwall's gross domestic product is directly affected by Devonport.

That is why hon. Members in all parts of the House are so dismayed at the extent to which the Government have procrastinated over the Devonport decision. It is not that there has simply been more thought about it; they have repeatedly returned to the parties for support. In the Christmas Adjournment debate, I pointed out that it was totally unfair to keep a loyal work force on tenterhooks at Devonport and, indeed, at Rosyth. Since then, the Ministry of Defence has given the parties another chance to consider the decision; what was previously a Dutch auction has become a double Dutch auction, and it is time that the Government made up their mind.

Reference has been made to the resourcing of the urban development corporation, but the economic context in which the UDC will have to operate is clearly critical. In that regard, I wish to refer to EC funding.

As the Minister will know, his colleagues at the Department of Trade and Industry recently made a bid to the European Commission for objective 1 status for Devon and Cornwall. The inclusion of all of Devon and Cornwall

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

automatically prevented the bid from being successful. On 3 March, in answer to my written question, the Minister made it clear that had Cornwall alone or Cornwall and Plymouth been able to make the bid, they almost certainly would have achieved objective 1 status. If that were done now, after devaluation, which has reduced our GDP figures, it would be below the 75 per cent. threshold. It is critical not only that we have the UDC, but that we take advantage of all the funding that we can get.

Mr. Harris: Surely the hon. Gentleman appreciates that the Commission determines the units put forward from Britain to qualify for objective 1 status. It was at the insistence of the Commission that Devon and Cornwall were lumped together. I heartily agree with the hon. Gentleman, but it was the fault of the Commission and not the Government.

Mr. Tyler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, but he is incorrect. The answer that I received from the Economic Secretary made it quite clear first, that

"the final decision is to be taken by the Council of Ministers"

—[*Official Report*, 3 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 163.]

and, secondly, that the bid was put in for Devon and Cornwall and the possibility of a separate bid for Cornwall was not even considered. Until now, nobody has chosen what may well be the right option—to link Plymouth and Cornwall—which would almost certainly qualify to receive the support of the EC structural funds that are essential to ensure that the UDC is not simply a drop in the ocean but the beginning of something more substantial.

There are three important options, and I hope that hon. Members in all parts of the House will support the proper funding of development agencies in Plymouth and the wider Cornish and Devon economy.

Much reference has been made to Sir Francis Drake. It is not widely known that he was actually a Member of this House. He represented the constituency of Bossiney, which is now in my constituency. He demonstrated that sometimes one has to stick together with the people in one's own area against the London Government. Indeed, he spent more time attacking the London Government than attacking the Spaniards.

Mr. Greg Knight (Lords Commissioner to the Treasury): Rubbish.

Mr. Tyler: The hon. Gentleman obviously has not read history or studied the career of Sir Francis Drake. I assure the hon. Gentleman that he was an effective buccaneer on behalf of his part of the country.

During recent months, there has been unanimity among Members of Parliament in the south-west, from all parties, that we need more support and investment to enable our economy to turn the corner. We are still at the bottom of a very severe slump. Conservative central office pointed out that that was why the Conservatives lost so badly to the Liberal Democrats. It is extremely important for the Government to show that they are now determined to pull our economy out of that slump.

1.50 am

The Minister for Local Government and Inner Cities (Mr. John Redwood): We have had a good-humoured debate, despite both the lateness of the hour and what happened beforehand. It is a pity that the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) accused me of arrogance when I offered more time for the House to hear the views of other hon. Members, who had important points to make, and offered to answer their points at the end of the debate, if time permitted. It is a shame that he has not been here to listen to the debate and to the answers to some of the points that he said were important and needed discussion.

A number of hon. Members raised important issues. It is right that we should press on quickly once the House has approved the motion tonight. I hope that, within a few days, I can announce the name of the new chairman of the urban development council. I also hope to press on quickly with the appointment of the full board of 10 members, including the chairman. I hope that we will reach rapid agreement with local councils. We wish to co-operate fully with them. We are proposing that five of the 10 board members should be representatives of the two councils concerned. Timing is very important and we will move forward rapidly. We are also in the process of drafting suitable advertisements for the post of chief executive. Once the chairman is announced, he will want rapidly to appoint a suitable chief executive.

I am glad that there was wide-ranging support from a number of hon. Members for the proposal in general, including the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours)—who I am glad to see back in his place—from the Opposition, after a little prompting, and from my hon. Friends, who have been strong in their support and who have worked hard to ensure that the UDC comes into being.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Henderson) adopted his usual line of welcoming public money but wanting to know whether there was enough of it—and then producing further proposals for even more money and even bigger bodies. There is a new Labour belief in regional non-elected quangos, in addition to the regional committees that the Opposition have also proposed. They want both regional committees and regional development quangos, but as always they have not said who would pay for them, by how much taxes would have to rise, and how the bodies would avoid becoming unduly bureaucratic.

We are proposing a formula that works—a UDC formula that has brought great benefits to many parts of the country through the 11 UDCs that are up and flourishing. That formula will harness the energies of the private sector to the public money that is available. It recognises the interrelationship between property development, land clearance, the creation of new jobs, the attraction of enterprise and the commitment that that can make to regenerating and improving the local community.

The hon. Gentleman and I have often debated the nature of urban regeneration, and I think that we agreed that is about more than property redevelopment and development. However, I think that, in his more honest moments, he would concede that property development plays an important part in creating the new environment in which jobs can materialise, and that jobs are important in giving hope, life and confidence to communities. That is one of the prime tasks of the UDC.

We have set out signs of the funding over a five-year period for the UDC from Government sources. There are land transfers to it in the areas identified on the map that is attached to the proposed order.

That will not be the sole funding for improving opportunities in Plymouth. We have already made available additional moneys through many programmes. Recently, £5 million in the form of city grant has been paid for projects in Plymouth. There has been derelict land grant. Urban partnership money—£1·8 million, which will lever in other substantial sums—will produce much-needed road improvements, which in turn could trigger private investment. In addition, £2·5 million of estate action money has recently been passed to Plymouth, and more is to come. Under a variety of Government programmes, in addition to the UDC, money has been made available. I am sure that in future Plymouth will continue to benefit from the programmes that we are operating.

In addition, there are the substantial sums that are going to the county council and the city council. The councils have a significant role to play in important programmes that are related to the future prosperity of Plymouth and the adjacent region. It is—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Workington asserts from a sedentary position that funding has been cut. He should study the figures. He will find that in recent years there has been a massive increase in Government funding of local government, and that has applied to Devon and Plymouth as it has to the rest of the country.

The hon. Gentleman laughs, because he knows that billions upon billions of extra pounds have been given in grants to local authorities throughout the country to strengthen the core services of education, training, social services and planning, which are so important to successful communities and which we thoroughly support. We believe also in getting value for that money and in introducing important policies to improve quality and efficiency. We shall ensure that the money is well spent.

I had no sympathy for the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, North when he went into another of his tirades about the London Docklands development corporation. It is not a relevant subject for this debate but his illustration was wide of the mark. The area involved is totally different from that in Plymouth. His criticisms of the LDDC, as always, were ill based and ill founded. The hon. Gentleman still does not understand that there is a great triumph throughout the docklands area and that there are five or six distinct parts of east London, several of which have been developed in an excellent way to produce affordable housing, jobs and inward investment. All this has transformed the area, which had been desecrated by Labour councils for years before.

Mr. Henderson: Does the Minister think that Canary Wharf has been a success? Would he want to repeat the scheme in Plymouth?

Mr. Redwood: It is much better to have large new buildings on that site than derelict and rundown docks with no economic function. I ask the hon. Gentleman to come with me to the area in five years time. I think that he will find then that there is a great success. It is one that will bring much prosperity and life to the area.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) has worked tirelessly on behalf of his constituents and the city. I was flattered by his remarks, but I would not wish to suggest that I should stand alongside Sir Francis, who made such an important contribution to the life of the nation. I shall, of course, stand up for Plymouth, as I have in recent months. I believe that there is an important job of work to be done in the city and that we can do it in partnership with the people there, with suitable Government funding along the lines that I have outlined and identified in the House tonight and on other occasions elsewhere.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton is right to say that the private sector is vital in Plymouth. It is clear that it can make a vital contribution. I welcome what it has done already. I am sure that the UDC will be asking it to do far more over the next five years as it goes about its life.

The UDC must listen carefully to local opinion. I am sure that it will welcome my hon. Friend's suggestion about the area of Turnchapel. There is the crucial question of how much of the land adjacent to it should be open space and what parts of the site should be identified for suitable development to create the jobs and the new prosperity that my hon. Friend wishes to see. We shall ask the board to be sensitive to local views. With five out of 10 of its members being local councillors, we hope that it, too, will want to follow the process through. Its members should know the local area and they should want to listen carefully to the local people.

Wherever possible, the UDC should employ local talent labour. It must seek value for its money, but I am sure that many in Plymouth will be willing and able to fulfil the roles that the UDC will need to have fulfilled as it goes about spending its money.

My hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Drake (Dame J. Fookes) has been most assiduous in putting forward her constituents' views. I am sure that the House understands that her special position as one of your colleagues, Mr. Deputy Speaker, prevents her from making a direct statement in tonight's debate.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson) welcomes the proposal. I can assure him that this is a first but important step. It is one of several steps as we live through the life of the UDC, which will be developing plans and taking many steps which will not only generate prosperity for its immediate area but will help in the regeneration and renewed prosperity of the adjacent areas to its own territory. This is a big step, which the House should welcome.

I am glad that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) is a keen supporter of the measure. I agree that Plymouth has a great deal to recommend it as a place for inward investment and for self-generated creativity and business development and as a place which can do a great deal for itself given a little help from the UDC and the Government programmes that we have already identified.

I shall be working with the UDC to ensure that Plymouth's name, skills and opportunities are well known to investors from Britain and elsewhere. I am keep to see Plymouth restored to higher levels of employment and lower levels of unemployment than are currently being experienced, and I am sure that this initiative is an important step along that road.

I think that the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Taylor) welcomed the proposal, although he mainly spoke on other subjects. Of course, a thriving dockyard is important to Plymouth and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has already outlined the Government's position in principle on the two dockyards and will be announcing in due course the other part of the decision which the House is keen to know for the sake of Plymouth and our naval dockyards generally.

[Mr. Redwood]

I trust that the House will welcome the order tonight. I urge every hon. Member to support it and, at this late hour, it would be a good idea if it went through without a Division.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Plymouth Development Corporation (Area and Constitution) Order 1993, dated 20th January 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25th January, be approved.

Sex Tourism (South-east Asia)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

2.2 am

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): We move from Plymouth to Thailand. Despite the late hour, this is an important debate and I am delighted to have the opportunity to raise the subject. It would have been debated much earlier but for some of the most appalling antics that I have seen in the House since I was elected on 9 April 1992.

The fact that this is an important issue has been recognised by the very fact that 138 Members of Parliament have signed early-day motion 1168 on sex tourism in Thailand, asking that action should be taken to stamp it out.

This is my first Adjournment debate. I could have chosen almost any subject—perhaps one closer to my home of the Ribble valley rather than something that is going on in Thailand many miles away. However, I am grateful to have this opportunity to air such an important subject tonight. I know that many people will read the report of this debate in *Hansard* in days to come and will take heed of what I and the Minister have to say.

The whole issue is enmeshed in corruption, drugs, violence, power and perversion. Sex tourism is big money. It is seedy and sordid. It is the perverted preying on the poor. A whole generation is in danger of being wiped out by AIDS.

Thousands of women and children are involved. Independent estimates vary from between 200,000 and 800,000 children being involved in prostitution. That is an astounding figure. Even the much lower estimate of 30,000 child prostitutes that the Government hide behind is amazing.

Children as young as seven years of age have been involved in prostitution in Thailand, and with AIDS rife in the area, sex tourism is not just a carefree fling but a death sentence for thousands in the region.

Thailand has always been tarred with the reputation of easy sex, but it is now scarred with child exploitation and forced prostitutes. How do the young become involved in that lethal trade? Money inevitably has a role, but so have absolute poverty and the lack of education.

Some parents feel forced to sell their children into prostitution, to raise money to fund their drug addiction. The Thai Government have come down hard on foreigners who try to smuggle drugs into the country. I only wish that they would come down equally hard on foreigners visiting Thailand to prey on the children of that country.

Villages in the north are being depopulated. Those villages are poor, and have nothing to offer their young. Consequently, those youngsters are attracted by the bright lights of the south, just as youngsters are attracted to cities in any other part of the world. Eventually, those young people are sucked into child prostitution.

Parents in the north see the opportunity to raise lump sums—money that they could otherwise only dream about—by selling their children into prostitution. The money is spent on drugs or on the consumer products that they covet. That gives rise to the prospect of pimps moving in.

There is a premium on young children. Some visitors to Thailand naively imagine that child prostitutes will not have AIDS. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Whereas older prostitutes may resist certain perverted practices, younger children will not. HIV passes more easily through the blood stream than anything else, so if bleeding takes place—and the chances are that it will with young children—the virus will be transmitted.

That leads in turn to another problem. Those who have contracted diseases are compelled to borrow money from pimps to pay for hospital treatment. They find themselves locked into a life style and hooked by their pimps for the foreseeable future.

Tourism in Thailand has boomed in recent years. In the 1960s only 180,000 visited the country on holiday. Today, the figure is 5 million. Rice used to be Thailand's big earner, but now tourism is the No. 1 earner—and the foreign exchange it generates is extremely valuable.

In 1980, the then deputy Prime Minister, Boonchoo Rojanasthian, spoke at a national conference of provincial governors and urged them to boost tourist numbers by encouraging

"certain entertainments, which some of you may find disgusting and embarrassing because they are related to sexual pleasure."

That is an amazing declaration from a deputy Prime Minister, but those were his words. As tourism increased, so did the sex trade.

The supply of Thai children for sex is supplemented by children from Burma, Laos and China, where sex tourism is seen as a means of escaping from the poverty of their home economies. Kidnapping goes on as well, to ensure a constant supply of young people to the area. In the 1980s, when one of the brothels was burnt down, the bodies of five young children were discovered handcuffed to beds. This appalling traffic of flesh and blood meets the demands of paedophiles from the west. We export our perverts to prey on innocent children.

Some of the children who try to escape from their brothel prisons are beaten and tortured, and some are killed. Some are drugged to make them compliant. Sudrat S. Srisang, the project consultant of the ecumenical coalition on third-world tourism, has stated:

"consumption of sexual favours has become so open and crude that the demand for new varieties of sexual fantasy inevitably arises. Engaging in acts of intercourse with minors has become the rage."

There are the pimps on the make; the compliant parents with topsy-turvy values, who sell their kith and kin for a lump sum; and a system that outlaws such acts—for they are against the law in Thailand—but is only too willing to turn a blind eye to their continuation. There are collusions between some local police and politicians—parasites on the people. It is a gruesome corruption, of which children are the victims. Even the Thai Prime Minister, Chuan Leekpai, noted in a speech last year that the problem of child prostitution stemmed from the collusion of police officials with influential local figures.

Dr. Robert Spink (Castle Point): Will my hon. Friend join our own Prime Minister in condemning child pornography, which promotes the activity that he is describing?

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. Like my hon. Friend and many other hon. Members, I visited the exhibition of pornography that was held in the House not long ago, and I was amazed at some of the things that I saw: I had never thought that such things went on. Unfortunately, they lead to the perversion and corruption of people, some of whom then go out to Thailand to satisfy their desires.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Is not the key problem with child pornography in this country the fact that, although there are heavy penalties for trafficking, the penalty for possession is still only a modest fine? It is not an arrestable offence.

Mr. Evans: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. I know that he feels very strongly about the subject; he has spoken about it in the House many times.

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for bringing the matter to the House's attention. Many of us were previously unaware of this horrid and depraved practice, and we are immensely grateful to him: Parliament is well served by his action.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that this matter is being debated at such a late hour is entirely due to petty practices on the part of Opposition Members? Given that they knew that matters of such gravity would be discussed later, it is deplorable that they should choose to focus on other issues.

Mr. Evans: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. I know that he fights very hard to raise the moral values that, unfortunately, have fallen so readily in our own country. He has made his point only too well; this debate should indeed have been held a long time ago.

In a letter to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 11 February, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—my right hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad)—hit the nail on the head when he said that the difficulty with the problem was not education but enforcement. As I said earlier, many of the things that go on in Thailand are against the law, but too many people are turning a blind eye to what is happening because there is money to be made.

Unfortunately, some of the children who have been sucked into prostitution are arrested one night and then, on payment of a very small fine to the police, are released the next day and go straight back into child prostitution. Action should be taken to stamp that out.

We are signatories to article 34 of the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. It calls for international co-operation to protect children worldwide from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. This issue—which I believe has appalled so many of us who are here this evening, and many other colleagues who have spoken to me about what is going on in Thailand—ought to be raised at every opportunity by Ministers and officials with the Thai Government.

The Thai Government must beef up their laws. They must also enforce their laws on this abuse. We must give as much assistance as we possibly can to the Thai police and the Thai authorities. Our police expertise should be shared with the Thai authorities. I know that we cannot police the world. Some people say that we are not so good at policing our own country. I believe, however, that we ought to share the knowledge and expertise that we have built up over a long period with the Thai authorities.

One of the first things that we should do is make available to the Thais a list of all known paedophiles so that these perverts can be prevented from going into that

[Mr. Evans]

country. Germany will probably introduce a law shortly to enable the Germans to try people in Germany who are suspected of having sex with children in another country.

If that becomes law in Germany, can I ask the Minister to monitor what happens there, see whether we can learn from that process and, if so, introduce a similar law in this country? If any of our paedophiles then went to Thailand, got caught and were deported to this country, they could be tried in this country for that offence.

Without any shadow of a doubt, all the agencies—whether they be non-governmental, the Churches, Interpol or the police authorities—need to get together to make a concerted effort to ensure that this depravity and child corruption is stamped out as soon as possible in Thailand. It is an absolute nightmare for the children who live in Thailand at this moment.

The world seems to unite when it comes to tackling the problem of saving the Amazon rain forest. Can we not therefore unite to save the children of Thailand?

2.17 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): It gives me particular pleasure to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) on securing this very important debate. Apart from it being a very humane and proper subject to discuss, my hon. Friend is also a near parliamentary neighbour of mine, and a fellow colleague from Lancashire. I felt that he did the House a singular service in painting a vivid and moving word picture of this vile trade and by referring to some of the unsavoury and sometimes almost unspeakable things that happen to innocent children who get caught up in this disgusting trade.

In preparing myself for the debate, I watched the "Dispatches" television programme. It provided a singular service by showing vividly just exactly what is involved. My hon. Friend mentioned the recent exhibition, which I too saw. What he may have seen is perhaps not as bad as it can be, in terms of the way that paedophiles use this type of information. I visibly winced when I saw other material of this nature. Therefore, I understand the enormous sensitivities that this issue evokes. The very fact that 138 hon. Members have already signed early-day motion 1361 is a genuine sign of how seriously the House takes this issue.

I was glad that my hon. Friends the Members for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), for Castle Point (Dr. Spink), for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) and for Langbaurgh (Mr. Bates) were in the Chamber for the debate, and that they lent their support to our hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend rightly mentioned concerted action on a worldwide basis. It is important to put in context article 34 of the United Nations's convention on the rights of the child, which this country ratified in 1991 and which requires parties to take

"all appropriate national, bilateral, and multilateral measures to prevent:

a. the inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity;

b. the exploitative use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices;

c. the exploitative use of children in pornographic performances and materials."

Although we signed up to the resolution, I must say that it is for individual states to determine what measures are appropriate to discharge that commitment, and the convention does not stipulate that extended criminal jurisdiction, which has been mentioned in this regard, must be introduced.

The United Kingdom has not been complacent, but has raised the issue at an international level. Indeed, at last year's Commission on Human Rights, we co-sponsored a resolution implementing a programme of action for the prevention of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. At last year's United Nations General Assembly, we introduced a resolution on the problem of street children. It was adopted by consensus, and we are following up both resolutions at this year's session of the Commission on Human Rights, which began on 1 February. We have done something solid in taking up the problem.

My hon. Friend mentioned the size of the problem, which is notoriously difficult to predict. Worrying about which figure we choose should not diminish the seriousness of the problem, because if only one child is involved in this vile trade, that is one child too many.

My hon. Friend referred specifically to what was happening in Germany, and rightly suggested that the German Government's action should be monitored. I can give him an assurance that we shall monitor the German Government's action in that regard, but part of the reason they have taken the action they have is that they are constitutionally prohibited from extraditing their own nationals. They are unable to do what we would do, which is to use our own extradition procedures to send anyone charged with such vile crimes in Thailand back to Thailand to face justice there. We would also use the various powers that we have to help in getting evidence if someone were to be extradited. I shall spend a moment talking about the judicial co-operation at our disposal for help in these circumstances.

We have taken steps to aid the enforcement of criminal law where there is an international element. We passed the Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Act 1990, which specifically enables us to assist criminal investigations in foreign countries by arranging for the service of summonses and other legal documents in this country, for statements to be taken from witnesses or for other evidence to be obtained here. The Act also provides for a person in custody to travel abroad to assist in proceedings and, in certain cases, for the search of premises here and the seizure of documents or other evidence. In that way, we are able to assist other countries to enforce their domestic law but, in the final analysis, the main responsibility must rest with them—in this case, the Thai authorities.

I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall do all we can to assist, but we should not lose sight of the fact that it is for each country to enact its own laws and to ensure that they are properly enforced, a telling point raised by my hon. Friend.

In watching "Dispatches", I took some comfort from the fact that the Thai Prime Minister twice made clear his personal concern about and commitment to dealing with the problem. If our extradition proceedings are to be brought into play, the question of getting evidence and finding persons involved in the vile trade and bringing charges against them is an important first step in the process.

Some people have suggested that we might, for example, do what the Germans do. But in the few moments remaining at my disposal, I must tell my hon.

Friend that, if we were to do so, there would be serious problems in evidential terms. He will understand that, in this country, considerable strictures govern the gathering and presentation of evidence in our courts, and it would therefore be difficult to bring cases in the simple way suggested. As I have already said, however, we shall monitor what happens in Germany.

I want to make it clear to the House that, although I have emphasised our work within the United Nations, our efforts to give prominence to the matter do not stop there. The Government have taken extensive steps to ensure that the Thai Government are made fully aware of our concern about the sexual exploitation of children through prostitution. We have emphasised our willingness to assist with prosecutions where appropriate. Our ambassador has made several representations about prostitution to the Thai Prime Minister, and has assured him that his Government is urgently considering ways in which to tackle the problem. In addition, the Thai Government have made public their concern and their resolve to take effective action.

We shall, of course, continue to bring to bear whatever pressure is appropriatre in an effort to ensure that the issue is properly dealt with. The fact that the House is having a debate on the subject should assist that process.

Dr. Spink: Will the Minister take this opportunity to make the public totally aware of the fact that to go abroad and indulge in such activity is illegal and puts people at grave risk, not only from the law in this country and in Thailand, but in terms of AIDS and venereal disease? My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) strongly made that point.

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend raises an important point, but although a debate such as this, if properly publicised and used, can serve to inform the public, one of the problems is that around the world there is no uniform code on the age bracket at which such offences occur. That is one of the dimensions of the problem involved in bringing people to book in this country for offences that they may have committed abroad, when there are differences between the legal codes. Nevertheless, my hon. Friend makes a valid point, especially with reference to AIDS. My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley, too, drew out that aspect extremely clearly—and anyone who happened to watch the television programmes on the subject could have been left in no doubt about it.

I hope that what I have said in the limited time available has conveyed to my hon. Friend the fact that we take the subject very seriously, and that we shall put the full weight of our extradition procedures and our international co-operation at the disposal of the Thai authorities should they be able to bring charges. But I lay particular emphasis on what we can do to reinforce their resolve to tackle the problem, both through the work that we have undertaken in the United Nations and through the work that our ambassador is doing in Thailand.

I again congratulate my hon. Friend on raising the matter. We shall monitor the situation closely.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 11 March 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

CROSSRAIL BILL *(By Order)*

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

GREATER MANCHESTER (LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT SYSTEM) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

RIVER HUMBER (UPPER BURCOM COOLING WORKS) BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 18 March.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [8 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed on Thursday 18 March.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Extradition (India)

1. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the names of those persons India has sought in recent years to extradite from the United Kingdom.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): There has been one extradition request from India in recent years. The application was withdrawn and it would not therefore be right to name the individual concerned.

Mr. Madden: As the Indians have sought to extradite only one person in recent years, what is the justification for asking Parliament to approve an extradition treaty between Britain and India? Why is Parliament being asked to approve this wretched treaty, bearing in mind the appalling human rights violations that are being committed in India each and every day? Thousands of extrajudicial murders are being committed, including that of the leading lawyer Kulwant Singh; thousands of people are being held in detention without trial, including the Kashmiri leaders Shabir Shah and Yasin Malik and two Britons.

Will the Home Secretary agree to meet United Kingdom-based Indian organisations to discuss the human rights position in India and defer the orders asking Parliament to approve the treaty?

Mr. Clarke: I regret that the hon. Gentleman should choose to use his question to make a partisan and rather wild speech about Indian politics. The fact is that India is the largest working democracy in the world, has a legal system based on ours and is both a very close ally of this country and a leading member of the Commonwealth. It is plainly right that we should have up-to-date extradition arrangements between India and the United Kingdom. It is particularly important that the so-called political defence should not be cited in criminal charges that turn on terrorism, from which both our countries suffer. I will commend the orders to the House in due course.

Mr. Allen: The Home Secretary may be aware of the problems surrounding extradition. Will he act now to end the difficulties highlighted in the immigration and nationality section of his Department which were exposed by the report of the Select Committee on Home Affairs? Does he agree with the Committee's conclusion that the delays are being used as an unauthorised and unofficial means of control? As the Conservative Government are seeking to hide behind the citizens charter, will he press for the charter to redress some of the appalling delays that are now evident in his Department?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to say that we are making satisfactory progress in reducing delays in both the immigration and nationality divisions. We shall continue to do so, by improving the management and control of the workload. We are also very near to completing parliamentary discussion of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill, which will enable us to handle many cases

much more speedily, not just in the relevant areas but in many others. If the Opposition had not opposed the Bill and protracted discussion of it for so long, we would have made still more progress in reducing the delays about which the hon. Gentleman now has the nerve to complain.

Drug Trafficking

2. **Sir Roger Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the maximum penalties available for trafficking in class A drugs; and if he will make a statement.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): The maximum penalties available to the courts in cases of trafficking in class A drugs are life imprisonment or an unlimited fine, or both.

Sir Roger Moate: Does my hon. Friend agree that that threat of life imprisonment and the Attorney-General's right to appeal against lenient sentences represent two of the most crucial weapons in the battle against drug smuggling? They would not exist but for a provision in the Criminal Justice Act 1988, which the Labour party opposed. Is not it disgraceful that Labour should oppose that measure, as well as many other law and order measures introduced by the Conservatives?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is why the Conservative Government increased the maximum penalty from 14 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment or an unlimited fine, or both. Opposition Members have voted against every major piece of law and order legislation since 1979.

Mr. Trimble: The Minister will know that paramilitary organisations are deeply into drug trafficking as a means of raising funds and are doing so in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Is there any evidence that they are involved in similar activities in England and Wales and, if so, what are the Government doing about it?

Mr. Wardle: The Government are well aware that drug trafficking is an international business. That is why we have bilateral agreements with 28 countries, why we ratified the United Nations convention in 1988, along with 70 other countries, why we are a major donor to the United Nations drug control programme and why we provide 33 liaison officers who are working in various countries to fight drug trafficking.

Safer Cities

3. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the main achievements of his Department's safer cities initiatives; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Michael Jack): The main achievement of the 20 safer cities projects has been successfully to implement the partnership approach to crime prevention, where local agencies work together to tackle crime problems. Through this approach, the projects have supported more than 3,000 local crime prevention schemes.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the safer cities programme is an excellent example of the Government working with town halls and police forces to cut crime? Will he make safer cities funds available to Bolton for my campaign against crime and will he ensure that town halls do not follow Labour's soft line on crime, because juvenile criminals should be in special schools, not playing truant, robbing and thieving?

Mr. Jack: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his personal lead in and endorsement of crime prevention in Bolton. He is an assiduous Member of the House and takes these matters seriously. I thank him for underlining the case for Bolton and I will certainly bear its credentials in mind when we come to make those decisions.

Mrs. Roche: If the Minister is so keen on the partnership approach to crime prevention, why have not the Government implemented the recommendations of the Morgan report, which has been widely acclaimed and which is all about partnership between local authorities and the police?

Mr. Jack: With no disrespect to the authors of the Morgan report, we have already implemented the partnership approach through safer cities, which is very different from the Labour party, whose manifesto did not even contain the word "community". The only difference between our approach and that of the Morgan report to partnership is that we do not believe that local authorities should have a statutory duty to do what is common sense.

Sunday Trading

4. **Dr. Hampson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he is giving to the discretionary powers given to local authorities in registering shops for Sunday opening in the preparation of his legislation; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): We will bring to the House a Bill containing the three main options for reform of Sunday trading. One of those, the option put forward by the Keep Sunday Special Campaign, may give some limited discretion to local authorities to decide which of those shops meeting specified criteria should be allowed to trade on Sundays. We are discussing this with the KSSC.

Dr. Hampson: Does my hon. Friend agree that it would be no service to customers at large and, indeed, would seriously inhibit trade if as much discretion were given to local authorities as provided for in the Bill promoted by the hon. Member for Ogmore (Mr. Powell)? Does he also accept that, while we wait for the precise drafting of the Government's Bill, there is a risk of a serious and unhealthy vacuum being created, so will he publish the various options as soon as possible, in advance of the Bill itself, to inform public debate?

Mr. Lloyd: That is a good suggestion and we intend to do just that.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that it is not good guidance to give to other lawbreakers that if they break the law often enough, the Home Office might become lenient?

Mr. Lloyd: No, it is not good guidance. We change the law in the House on the merits of the case, not according to whether the law is obeyed or otherwise. I have condemned the breaking of the law in the past and am happy to do so now. The law as it stands should be obeyed until it is changed.

Surveillance Techniques

5. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to increase the range of surveillance techniques to catch criminals.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Various surveillance techniques are being developed to aid the police in their fight against crime. It would not be in the public interest to disclose details of them.

Mr. Banks: In putting the police and the public on a vigorous offensive against criminals, will my hon. Friend ensure that every available technique, including the use of electronic devices and the deployment by the police of decoys, will be widely practised and encouraged? Will he assure the House that the police will be provided with all the latest technology so that they can catch the criminal in the act and detect and hunt down the others?

Mr. Wardle: As my hon. Friend says, surveillance technology has been advancing rapidly and provides an improved new means of detection. The use of surveillance technology and the amount of money spent on it in each police force is a matter for the chief officer. In the private sector, closed-circuit television and video recordings have been used to good deterrent effect in car parks, sports grounds and shopping centres.

Neighbourhood Watch

6. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reduction in levels of recorded crime have been achieved by the introduction of neighbourhood watch schemes.

Mr. Jack: Many factors influence recorded crime levels and, generally, it is not easy to isolate the influence of neighbourhood watch overall. However, detailed studies in parts of the Kirkholt estate in Rochdale and in a council estate in Wythenshawe in Greater Manchester have shown that neighbourhood watch schemes can have an effect on the rate of recorded crime.

Mr. Hunter: Does my hon. Friend agree that the most successful neighbourhood watch schemes are those that draw on the energies of local people and local police and that any statutory requirement on local authorities to promote crime prevention could stifle those successful schemes with red tape?

Mr. Jack: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's comments. When I previously looked at work done in 1987 on the cost of crime to local authorities, it came to £500 million. I am sure that the thought of saving that money would appeal to local authorities and encourage them to play their role in the partnership approach to crime prevention.

We wish to encourage the development of neighbourhood watch. A new neighbourhood watch co-ordinators' manual is to be produced soon and further Home Office advice will be available on local crime prevention panels to encourage that partnership approach.

Mr. Corbett: How does the Minister square his claimed support for neighbourhood watch, which Labour Members strongly suport, with the current freeze on police manpower in England and Wales, given that the most successful schemes involve large amounts of police time? Will he examine that matter?

Mr. Jack: I am delighted to have some endorsement of our partnership approach to crime prevention. The neighbourhood watch scheme was introduced by the Conservative Government. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the police, but he and many of his hon. Friends do not talk about the effective use of the police. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is looking to improve the peformance of the police.

Mr. Shersby: Is my hon. Friend aware that there is insufficient work coming into Uxbridge magistrates court to enable the five courts to sit as they usually do? Is that due to a dramatic fall in the level of recorded crime in Uxbridge or some other matter?

Mr. Jack: I am certainly aware of some of the issues that have been discussed recently in relation to police clear-up rates. In the case of Uxbridge, I doubt whether crime is going down in total terms, but we are looking carefully at that analysis. I know that the Metropolitan police are looking at it. One of the values of good management information is that it shows up certain trends and encourages analysis of them.

Ms Ruddock: The Minister is familiar with neighbourhood watch schemes in my area, but he has drawn most attention to the impact of the Lewisham safer cities project in terms of crime prevention. Does he recall the summer youth challenge, which cut youth crime in Deptford by 28 per cent. and the Deptford business security scheme, which cut crime by 25 per cent? Where is the sense in cutting the Lewisham safer cities grant by two thirds when it delivers such results?

Mr. Jack: I remember the summer youth challenge. I was delighted to see the result and I have inquired into how it is continuing. The hon. Lady knows that at the outset of safer cities there was never an assurance of limitless funding from the Home Office for the first 20 projects. The job now is to use the £100,000 grant fund for the next financial year, together with the £500,000 fund from which safer cities projects can draw, to develop an exit strategy to put in place a lasting, locally based partnership in places such as Lewisham. The hon. Lady has demonstrated the effectiveness of the concept of safer cities and I am sure that the community in Lewisham would wish to continue it.

Child Cruelty (Law of Evidence)

7. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the NSPCC research on the law of evidence in child cruelty cases.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have asked the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children to let me have the results of its research in this area. I will assess its contents once I have received the reports.

Mr. Amess: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of the concern of the police, the general public and others about the right to silence? Does he agree that it was the Conservative Government who increased the maximum sentence against cruelty to children from two to 10 years and that it was the socialists in the Opposition who opposed the Criminal Justice Act 1988 which allowed for that provision and allowed tougher sentences generally? How does that square with the conversion of the socialists in the Opposition to law and order, as was demonstrated by the disgraceful scenes in the Chamber last night?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend, first, that the time has come to look again at the so-called right to silence in all criminal cases. However, it must be looked at with care. I have given evidence on the subject to Lord Runciman's royal commission. We should all wait for the report of the royal commission before we come to conclusions on that subject.

On the second question, it is the case that we increased the maximum penalty for child cruelty to 10 years in the 1988 Act. The Labour party voted against that Bill, as it has voted against every Bill that we introduced in the 1980s to strengthen the powers of the court. Judging from yesterday, its track record will continue in the same negative vein.

Mr. Olner: Does the Secretary of State agree that one of the ultimate cruelties that can be done to a child is for one of its parents to abduct it from its other parent and take it abroad? Will he keep up the funding for the organisation called Re-unite, which is the National Council for Abducted Children? Does he agree that that organisation does a tremendous job not only for parents who have their children abducted but for his Department? The timing is crucial for keeping up that funding.

Mr. Clarke: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of the cases to which he refers and the devastating effect that abduction can have on families. We have received an application for funding from the organisation to which the hon. Gentleman refers and we are considering it carefully.

Criminals (Public Castigation)

8. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce provisions for the public castigation of criminals in their own communities.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is already the case that the judge or magistrate passing sentence in open court is giving public expression to society's condemnation of the criminal behaviour that has led to the conviction.

Mr. Field: In view of the dastardly attack on an 81-year-old widow by three 10-year-old girls on Monday this week, has my hon. Friend had time to read the ten-minute Bill that I introduced in 1988 which imposed penalties on the parents of young criminals? Is not it time that the names and addresses of young thugs were exhibited in their community so that their families shared in their actions and the penalties that they have incurred?

Mr. Wardle: I recall my hon. Friend's ten-minute Bill. It was an important contribution to the debate on truancy, vandalism and young offenders. Of course, it was entirely unsurprising that so many Opposition Members voted against it. I do not agree with my hon. Friend that it would be right to label children publicly as criminals. It would tend to glamorise what they had done in many cases. However, he will be aware that the Criminal Justice Act 1991 involves parents more closely in the misdemeanours of their children and in paying fines for under-16s.

Mr. Soley: In the context of general wrongdoing, is not there a great deal of evidence to suggest that, rather than castigating people in the community, offenders should be made to compensate the community? That is better for both the offender and the community. For example, if people had their pond cleared out and wrongly benefited from that, or built an extension on their house wrongly, they could be made to dig out the village duck pond or build an extension on the community hall. Would not that be a good moral example to set the country?

Mr. Wardle: That depends largely on the crime, but, as the hon. Gentleman will know, community penalties under the 1991 Act are tougher than they previously were and, more importantly, are subject to national standards of enforcement and control.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Does my hon. Friend agree that humiliation is an important element in deterring the commission of crime and that if all that happens to delinquent children is that they are privately cautioned time and again, that element of humiliation will never deter them from further crime?

Mr. Wardle: As my hon. and learned Friend knows, 87 per cent. of juvenile offenders who are cautioned are not reconvicted within the next two years. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is addressing the more fundamental problem of persistent juvenile offenders which no doubt will be considered in legislation that will come before the House in this Parliament.

Crime

9. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he proposes to reduce crime in districts outside the designated inner-city areas.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government support and have encouraged the police and other agencies in the development of effective crime prevention programmes in all parts of the country. We support a combination of good policy and community-based crime prevention activity such as neighbourhood watch, which, with national initiatives such as Car Crime Prevention Year, can make an impact on local crime levels.

Mr. Lewis: How does that square with the comments of Earl Ferrers in another place that Greater Manchester police have 227 too many policemen? How does it square with the cancellation of the safer cities project or with the apparent lack of co-operation between Departments, which is distorting public spending and revenue support grant and not helping outer-city areas that have inner-city

problems? Westminster city council receives £500 per head more than Salford and Wigan. How can that be right and how will it help those on the ground, including neighbourhood watch, to deal with the problems that the Secretary of State mentioned?

Mr. Clarke: Police manpower is up by 30,000 compared with 10 years ago and since taking office we have increased real-terms spending on the police service by 81 per cent. In addition, we have backed projects such as safer cities in Salford, which has been a great success in reducing crime in parts of the borough. As my hon. Friend the Minister of State said, it was never the intention that the safer cities initiative should concentrate set sums of money in particular places indefinitely. We are moving on to a second phase of projects elsewhere and I expect that the Salford safer cities initiative will become self-financing, like similar initiatives elsewhere. We have spent £20 million on safer cities in the past three years and have made provision for a further £20 million over the next three years.

Mr. Lewis: Why scrap it if it is working?

Mr. Clarke: I am delighted by the hon. Gentleman's tribute to the success of our safer cities initiative, which, as he said, has reduced crime in parts of his borough.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the best way of reducing crime is by appropriate and rigorous punishment? When he considers amendments to the criminal justice system, will he bear in mind the fact that punishment should be aimed as much towards deterrence and protecting innocent members of the public as to rehabilitation of the offender? The Labour party obviously has not learnt that lesson, because in its manifesto for the last election it devoted only 155 words to law and order, which was less than it devoted to national heritage.

Mr. Clarke: I agree that one aspect of combating crime must be effective punishment. During our term of office, the length of sentences for violent and sexual offences has increased, which has given the public some relief from the activities of the most serious offenders. We tackle crime in other ways, such as Car Crime Prevention Year, safer cities, drug prevention teams and so on. The Labour party has not added much to those 160 words. It may have added verbiage, but, so far it has not made a single policy proposal since the election.

Mr. Alton: Does the Home Secretary agree that the massive increase in crimes against the person from 7,500 in 1955 to more than 191,000 last year is, in some small measure at least, attributable to the large amount of violence that is shown on television programmes? Has he seen today's report from Lord Rees-Mogg and the Broadcasting Standards Council, which mentions excessive levels of violence being shown, including an attack on an elderly lady that was screened just after 9 pm? Does he agree with Lord Rees-Mogg, rather than with Alan Yentob at the BBC, that excessive violence on television is one of the factors in the level of violence in society today?

Mr. Clarke: Personally, I agree with that—certainly up to a point. The increased propensity of young people to contemplate violence and growing insensitivity to violence have been encouraged by the extremely realistic violence to which they are more regularly exposed on television. Lord Rees-Mogg's group was set up to monitor that and to give strong advice to television companies. The best way to proceed is for the television producers and television authorities to show more common sense, good taste and restraint. I particularly agreed with Lord Rees-Mogg's strictures on Central Television for showing the interviews with the serial killer who is in prison. I tried strenuously through the law courts to prevent that action.

Mr. Stephen: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the public are particularly at risk in residential areas with a high incidence of burglary, in shopping centres and on public transport? Will he encourage the recruitment of many more special constables to protect the public in those places?

Mr. Clarke: Certainly; we are conducting a drive to recruit more special constables and we are experimenting with the introduction of modest payments for some special constables when they might otherwise lose earnings by participating. We very much value the contribution that special constables make. That will enhance the already increased manpower of the fully professional police force. It will also enhance everything that we are doing to reduce burglary in residential areas and, through business watch and other schemes, to make business premises safer as well.

Mr. Blair: Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman not aware that, as crime has more than doubled in the past 14 years and has risen by more than 50 per cent. in the past three years, now is the last time that we should be cancelling safer cities projects, which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) said, have actually been working? Does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman also understand that as crime is not getting better, but is getting worse, his message that there must be a freeze on police numbers is the worst possible message that he can give to the country? Would it not be better if he lifted the police freeze and allowed more policemen and women back on to the beat where they are wanted?

Mr. Clarke: The safer cities initiative had been one of the most successful things that the Government have done to tackle and reduce the level of crime in particularly difficult parts of cities. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman supports that policy. However, he is wrong to say that we are cancelling it. Some £20 million has been spent over the past three years and another £20 million is to be spent over the next three years. We are not continuing the central Government financing that we started with. We always made it clear that we were going to move on to other cities and we are doubling the number of projects.

I have already said that police manpower has increased by 30,000 since we took over from the former Labour Government an under-resourced, underpaid, undermanned police service and transformed it into a service which has been given a unique priority by this Government ever since we have been in office.

Mr. Burns: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that one of the proposals to which he should give more urgent consideration is that which relates to the responsibility of parents in controlling their children? Does he accept that it is absolutely crucial that parents do not abandon all responsibility for their children, that they ensure that their children are at home and supervised in the evenings, that their children do their homework and that

they spend more time talking with their children and entertaining them, instead of letting them go around our streets and towns at night, bored out of their brains, causing mindless acts of vandalism and crime?

Mr. Clarke: I endorse all that and I am sure that the progress of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education in establishing closer links between parents and schools and in tackling truancy and, I hope, involving parents in tackling truancy and confronting their responsibilities will help. Where parents fail to do that, and where they could make a better contribution, the Criminal Justice Act 1991 now gives power to the youth court to have parents brought before it, be bound over if necessary or obliged to pay their children's fines. As I recollect it, that was another strengthening of the law which was opposed by the Labour party.

Vehicle Security

10. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will meet the representatives of the motor car industry to discuss improvements to vehicle security.

Mr. Jack: I will be meeting representatives from the motor car industry later this month when they will be attending the second meeting of my advisory committee on car crime prevention.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to the Minister for that reply. Will he impress on the vehicle manufacturers when he meets them the need for vehicle immobilisers and deadlocks to be fitted as standard to all vehicles? I appreciate that the manufacturers are doing all that they can, but the time has come when those devices should be fitted as standard. Will the Minister also discuss with the manufacturers the reasons that they have put forward in respect of European car crime and will he try to discover why this country suffers more car crime than the rest of Europe?

Mr. Jack: I thank the hon. Gentleman for those supportive comments. After my visit to the motor show and seeing what is happening on the ground, I believe that many more manufacturers now have a wide range of models with the very equipment that the hon. Gentleman identified. Double locking or deadlocking are now available as standard on 25 per cent. of all models. I should certainly like to see that extended much further into model ranges. I will draw the attention of the vehicle manufacturers to the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my hon. Friend aware that not only is deadlocking required but immobilisers are essential? That is the only way to deal with the national scandal of car crime. Will my hon. Friend tell the manufacturers that if they do not respond, he will introduce regulations, as he did for safety belts?

Mr. Jack: It is interesting to look at the figures on immobilisers, which are currently available as standard or at point of sale on 97 per cent. of all United Kingdom-produced models. The message is getting home. Good common sense is enough to persuade manufacturers and it is clear in much of their advertising that security pays and security sells.

Police Cells

11. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress is being made to reduce the number of prisoners in police cells.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Since 12 February the Prison Service has not locked prisoners out of prison, except on one occasion on 4 March. Of course, police forces have continued the normal practice of detaining in police cells prisoners who have been taken into custody after it is too late to transfer them to prison that night.

Mr. Bennett: Can the Minister confirm that prisoners who ought to be in prison are still being held in police cells in Greater Manchester and that following the Strangeways riot over £200 million was spent on containing prisoners within police cells rather than in prisons? The money could have been far better spent on putting more police on the beat. The scandal of the way prisoners were dealt with after Strangeways was a disgrace to the Government.

Mr. Lloyd: Of course prisoners ought not to be kept in police cells. We have made enormous changes to the system to ensure that does not happen. The hon. Gentleman is right to say that police forces have been paid £200 million over the past two years for looking after those prisoners. That operation has been brought to an end, but we still need the co-operation of the police and the other criminal justice agencies to make sure that the rising number of prisoners now coming into prison does not again spill over into police cells.

Sir Anthony Durant: Will my hon. Friend have further discussions with the prison officers about these matters because there is resistance to taking in prisoners at late hours, which means the police have to look after them in cells? I do not believe that it is the job of police officers to guard prisoners in cells, except before they appear in court.

Mr. Lloyd: No, it is not. The courts generally finish by lunchtime or early afternoon and in most cases there is plenty of time to get people to prison. Prison officers do not organise to refuse to receive them if there are places in the prisons. There are now places in prisons. Where there are difficulties and courts sit late, there should be flexibility and communication from the police to the prisons warning them that they will be arriving with prisoners rather later than usual.

Mr. Hood: Is the Minister aware that the number of absconding prisoners in Scotland has doubled over the past two years? Has that anything to do with the changes in working practices and the indoctrination of prison officers?

Mr. Lloyd: I have no idea, as I have no responsibility for prison services in Scotland.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept that many people believe that individuals should be sent to prison when they have done wrong? Many people believe that too many are being granted bail and welcome the decision by the Court of Appeal that the south Wales rapist should be sent to a detention centre.

Mr. Lloyd: My hon. Friend's views will be shared by many. All I can say to him on the part of the Prison Service is that we take those whom the courts deliver to us.

Juvenile Crime

12. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost to the Exchequer of research into the causes of juvenile crime since 1979.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since 1979, my Department's research and planning unit has spent some £1·4 million on external projects and, in addition, has undertaken 16 internal projects, whose cost cannot be separately quantified, into juvenile crime, its causes and prevention.

Mr. Etherington: The Home Secretary will be aware that my constituency has the highest car theft rate in Great Britain. Much of it is carried out by young people and some of them are persistent offenders. In view of what the Home Secretary said yesterday about the benefits of prevention as a separate issue from punishment, does he agree that there should be proper resources to find out through in-depth research what motivates such anti-social behaviour? It would be of great benefit to the nation and would be one of the best investments ever to be made in Britain to help ameliorate the problem.

Mr. Clarke: Certainly we devote as much attention to the prevention of crime as we do to the equally important matter of how to punish or deal with people who commit it. As I have already said, we engage in a large amount of research, especially into the criminality of young people. That research demonstrates that parental attitudes, quality of discipline and lack of educational attainment all play a large part in encouraging young people to become juvenile delinquents. That is why I felt it necessary to bring forward some fresh proposals to deal with the most persistent juvenile offenders so that they can be kept in secure accommodation, properly educated and cared for by people who seek to instil a proper sense of values in them.

Mr. Dickens: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is all right having research and royal commissions but the general public want some action? It is no good telling television companies and the media research people that a 16-second advertisement on television sells so many million products and then asserting that sex and violence for hour after hour on television does not have an effect on young people. I honestly believe that my right hon. and learned Friend is getting down to the job, but we have been failed by successive Home Secretaries.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend may have heard me say that I believe that the level of violence on television has a significant effect on altering attitudes among the young. I hope that those who are responsible will take action on that. As for Government action in respect of what is available to children and young people through the media, the written word and other sources, some of the responsibility is mine. The broadcasting side of it is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage and I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will put equally pertinent questions to him.

Mr. Michael: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that Ministers will be more successful if they work harder at understanding the problem of juvenile crime? His Department has told the Select Committee on Home Affairs that juvenile crime is decreasing, but does he realise that there has been a major increase in the theft of cars, theft from cars and home burglary, three crimes in which research shows that young people play a major part? The right hon. and learned Gentleman praises many local projects, but will he now provide the strategy and resources so that crime can be prevented, with the result that every city, town and village will become safer?

Mr. Clarke: First, juvenile crime is not declining, as we all know from our own experience. The number of juvenile offenders is said to have decreased, as shown by some of my Department's statistics. In part, that is true. There are fewer juvenile offenders coming before the courts, but those who do tend to be committing a higher proportion of offences—and more serious offences. It is difficult to disentangle from the figures the effect of diverting young people out of the criminal justice system, which has been done in recent years. We put resources into research and we come up with proposed remedies, which is more than the Opposition do. We have designed our proposals with objectives such as safer cities in mind. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends now pay tribute to them.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that further research costs to the Exchequer and the British taxpayer could easily be saved if common sense were adopted? Juvenile crime flourishes because of lack of parental discipline, truancy from schools, far too much violence on television and videos and, most important of all, the absence of corporal punishment, which is the greatest deterrent to young thugs.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend about the importance place that common sense has to play in all these matters and how that should be put alongside academic research. In considering the problem of persistent juvenile offenders, which I have been doing since becoming Home Secretary, the best research that I was able to follow was the result of talking to chief constables, magistrates and judges, and being told how powerless the courts felt when dealing with the hard core of the most persistent offenders. We have responded to that by bringing forward proposals.

Prisoners (Northern Ireland)

13. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made in relation to the new arrangements governing the transfer of prisoners to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Those prisoners who previously expressed an interest in transferring to Northern Ireland have been advised of the new arrangements and invited to apply. To date, 28 transfer requests have been referred to the Northern Ireland prison service for its consideration. In addition, six prisoners are currently on extended temporary transfer in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the Minister for his reply. Does he agree that one of the essential elements of the rehabilitation of prisoners is close and frequent contact with their families? Does he accept that, in the case of Northern Ireland residents who are in prisons in Britain, transfer is desirable for the purpose of rehabilitation? Can

he confirm that since the publication of the Ferrers report the only prisoners to be transferred have been the six he has just mentioned? What is the current stage of the work of the new committee that is addressing the complex nature of permanent transfers, temporary transfers and extended temporary transfers?

Mr. Lloyd: The committee is still considering permanent transfers. I agree that, for the purposes of rehabilitation, transfer is a good move, so long as the prisoner is prepared to co-operate fully with the regime to which he is transferred and so long as prisoners who have rightly been sentenced to long terms of imprisonment here do not have their periods of detention reduced as a result of transfer.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 March.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Mudie: Can the Prime Minister tell the House how today's distressing news that 5,000 Rolls-Royce jobs are to be lost and how the fact that since he became Prime Minister 750,000 manufacturing jobs have been destroyed fit in with any supposed strategy for manufacturing industry? And can he tell the country when it can expect this industrial carnage to end?

The Prime Minister: Let me respond first to the hon. Gentleman's point about Rolls-Royce and the distressing announcement this morning of job losses at Derby and elsewhere. The hon. Gentleman will know that Rolls-Royce has two main international competitors, Boeing and Pratt and Whitney. He will know also that Pratt and Whitney has plans to cut 10,000 jobs over the next year or so and that Boeing will cut a total of 28,000 jobs. In both cases, the job losses have the same cause as those at Rolls-Royce—the state of the international market and of international demand. As to what is being done, I hope that the hon. Gentleman has not forgotten the long list of things that I set out the other day. If he wishes me to do so, I shall willingly repeat it.

Sir Terence Higgins: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to have discussions with the leader of the Labour party about the deplorable behaviour of the official Opposition last night, which was clearly encouraged by the Front Bench? Is it not pathetic that the Opposition have to resort to such tactics, instead of using effective debate, as these inevitably bring the House into disrepute?

The Prime Minister: Any discussions are for my right hon. Friend the Chief Whip and his Opposition counterpart. I condemn what apparently happened last night, although I was not in the House. I have to ask why the Leader of the Opposition did not stop it and, more relevantly, why his deputy Chief Whip seemed to be organising it.

Mr. John Smith *rose*——

Hon. Members: Answer.

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr. Smith: If manufacturing matters to the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The House must settle down and listen to what hon. Members have to say and to the responses.

Mr. John Smith: If manufacturing matters to the Prime Minister, as he would have us believe, what action does he intend to take to prevent the loss of 5,000 jobs at Rolls-Royce?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman still lives in a world in which the Government do everything and everything is the Government's fault. That may be his vision of the future, but for most people it is their vision of the past, and a past that was not successful. He should remember, for example, the national enterprise board. It picked losers, not winners, it cost millions, and many of its investments, taking the sort of action that the right hon. and learned Gentleman would advocate, subsequently went into liquidation or receivership.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not remember that an Administration headed by one of his predecessors took Rolls-Royce into public ownership, otherwise it would not be there today? Does he recollect that only last week he told us in his *The Independent* interview that we have undervalued engineering skills? What on earth is the point of his talking about the value of engineering skills when, as Prime Minister, he does nothing about the loss of 5,000 skilled engineering jobs?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman may also recall that we put many industries into privatisation, without which they would not be in profit and creating jobs today. The way to create engineering and other jobs is to make sure that we have a growing economy and the right sort of international competitiveness. We have intervened to get the single market running and we have improved export credit guarantees. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has clearly forgotten all the matters that were contained within the autumn Budget. It is not nannying intervention of the sort that the right hon. and learned Gentleman advocates that this country needs; it is the sort of supply-side measures that we are taking.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister not understand that this litany of self-serving excuses gives no comfort to the 5,000 people who are to lose their jobs, let alone the 10,000 Rolls-Royce workers who have lost their jobs in the recent past? Does he not understand that in France today the Government are giving temporary help to the aerospace industry precisely to keep skilled engineering groups together? Why does not his Government back British industry the way other Governments back their industry?

The Prime Minister: If France is so successful, why are there 3 million unemployed there? Here is the right hon. and learned Gentleman again with his perennial gloom. He might welcome some of the new jobs announced

recently: Digitals move for 1,100 more jobs at Ayr; the prospect of 3,000 more jobs in Staffordshire; the new jobs won yesterday in Cambridge; the 6,000 jobs to be created in Manchester. Why do these always bypass the right hon. and learned Gentleman on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons?

Q2. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bates: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that it is vital to the success of the security services that they are kept free from political interference in operational matters? If so, does he agree that the remarks made yesterday by a Labour spokesman on Northern Ireland were a total disgrace and a slur upon the courageous and dedicated way in which the security services carry out their duties on behalf of all of us?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend. Those remarks were absurd. They were a slur on officers whose achievements must have saved many people from death or injury. The Opposition would have done better, rather than attacking the police, to join us last night in attacking terrorism. The Leader of the Opposition might tell us whether he stands by what his hon. Friend said or by the police in what they have to do. He cannot do both.

Mr. Ashdown: On this bleak day for job losses, will the Prime Minister reflect on the fact that, while there are 3 million unemployed in Britain, there are also 3 million small businesses in Britain, and a real, extra boost for small businesses could provide a real, extra boost for jobs? Will he cut the uniform business rate and penalise the late payment of bills, or is he simply content to continue to let small businesses go to the wall, as at present, at the rate of 250 a day?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman has absolutely no idea that more than 400,000 new small businesses were formed last year. If he really wants to help create small businesses in future, perhaps he will stop joining others in delaying the European Communities (Amendment) Bill and putting at risk the inward investment that has totalled £100 billion in the past five years. If we have to choose between the right hon. Gentleman's principles and his action, we had better be careful not to decide on his action until he has done it.

Mr. Gale: My right hon. Friend will have struck a chord with most of our constituents when he recently drew attention to the corrosive effects of violence on television. Will he now go a stage further and direct the Cabinet's attention to the further effects of paedophilia created and transmitted by computer which, at present, is not covered by the law? Will he ensure that controls are included in the next criminal justice Bill?

The Prime Minister: I understand that that is covered by the law. But notwithstanding that, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is well seized of the difficulties raised by my hon. Friend and is examining them.

Q3. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Lewis: Will the right hon. Gentleman concede that it is now time to release the capital receipts, long held by local authorities, in order to bring skilled building workers back into work to provide decent homes for the homeless and for elderly people?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman may recall, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer released many of them in the autumn statement and those that have been released are currently being underspent by local authorities.

Mr. Marlow: We are told that we are winning the arguments in Europe. Does that mean that Mr. Delors, the Commission, Benelux, Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand are now enthusiastic decentralisers? Does that mean that the principle of subsidiarity will allow the House, and this House alone, to make a decision on whether we have a 48-hour week?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman knows, article 3b specifically puts subsidiarity into the EC treaty and changes the situation in the future about that matter. He himself should vote for that instead of obstructing it.

Mr. Bryan Davies: Will the Prime Minister explain to the House why he has tabled a motion again today to allow debate to continue on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill, a motion which has been tabled many times in recent weeks and never moved? Has he made a deal with the Liberals and nationalists this evening, or will he be running away from his second defeat this week?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman clearly is as keen as I am to see progress on the Bill.

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the latest excellent figures for new house sales which were 20 per cent. up in the first eight weeks of this year? The Opposition concentrate on talking Britain down, but is that not good news for Britain?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes his point with great clarity. He is quite right about housing. He will know that mortgage rates for first-time buyers are lower today than they have been since 1956, and that is before many families yet feel the benefit of the interest rate cuts since the autumn. Many people are clearly deciding that now is a good time to buy, and I welcome that.

Q4. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thurssday 11 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Taylor: Is the Prime Minister aware that prices in the South West Water region have risen 77 per cent. since 1989, faster than in the rest of the country, and are due to double over the next few years, faster than in the rest of the country? When the right hon. Gentleman recently visited Cornwall and Devon, he told the *Western Morning News* on 5 February that he was looking at action to help people with those problems. He told me last week on 4 March that he defended the price increases that we have seen. Which is right—what he said here or what he said in the west country?

The Prime Minister: I told the hon. Gentleman last week that the prices were broadly the same as those of Anglian Water, and they are. I can tell him again this afternoon that I am examining the matter with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Q5. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 March.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Atkinson: Is my right hon. Friend aware of a joint media campaign in my area called Action Desk, involving the *Bournemouth Evening Echo*, the Dorset chamber of commerce and Two Counties Radio, which is designed to beat the recession in our area by encouraging the spread of good news about our economic recovery and encouraging a positive approach by business and individuals?

Will my right hon. Friend commend this initiative and recommend it to other areas and above all, will he recommend it to the national media in order to counter the doom and gloom coming out of the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. It certainly is time that we started talking more positively about our good successes and about the opportunities we now have with low inflation and low interest rates.

Mr. Lewis: What about jobs?

The Prime Minister: And, in answer to that seated intervention, about the new jobs, many of which I listed a few moments ago. Exports are up; manufacturing productivity is up; car sales are up; house sales are up, and one day Opposition Members opposite may begin to acknowledge that.

HIV Testing (Medical Staff)

3.30 pm

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside) *(by private notice)*: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on issuing fresh guidelines in relation to key medical staff found to be HIV positive or who die from AIDS-related diseases and further consideration by the advisory group on the testing of medical staff involved in invasive surgery.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): All health care workers have an overriding ethical duty to protect the health and safety of their patients. The relevant professional bodies—the General Medical Council, the General Dental Council and the United Kingdom Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting—have issued guidelines which make this absolutely clear. The guidelines tell health care workers what they must do if they know, or suspect, that they may be infected with HIV.

It is absolutely essential that these guidelines are scrupulously observed. My Department's chief professional officers wrote to the heads of the GMC, GDC and UKCC on Monday stressing this messge. I have now asked them to summon those leaders to the Department to make clear our concern that the guidelines ae up to date and sufficiently robust and to examine whether any further steps can be taken to ensure that they are known and understood by all health care workers.

It is also the duty of all health authorities and trusts to ensure that the health care workers that they employ are aware of the guidelines and that they follow them to the letter. My Department has given guidance as to the correct procedures for handling incidents involving an HIV infected health care worker in the past on a case-by-case basis. This guidance is now being urgently reviewed and will be issued this month to all health authorities and trusts.

The Department's guidance already requires that the relevant professional guidance should be shown to prospective NHS employees. I intend to re-emphasise the need for this, particularly for those workers who may be involved in invasive procedures. They must be asked to confirm that they have read and understood the professional guidance.

All health care workers who believe that they may have any condition, including HIV infection, which might put their patient's safety at risk must seek medical advice. They must put their patient's safety first. Failure to do so would be a serious breach of professional practice.

As regards routine testing of health care workers for HIV infection, this is not a requirement anywhere in the world. The expert advisory group on AIDS, which met again on Tuesday, has reconfirmed its previous advice that routine testing of health care workers is not justified.

It must be stressed that the cases recently reported should be seen in the worldwide context. There are no reported cases of any doctor, nurse or midwife transmitting HIV infection to a patient.

I shall continue to keep the House fully informed of the progress of discussions with the regulatory authorities and I will place the advice that I will be issuing to health authorities and trusts in the Library of the House.

Mr. Blunkett: May I thank the Secretary of State for her statement? Will she accept that in asking her to make a statement we seek a bipartisan approach to the most important and sensitive issue that faces us—allaying fears, putting the protection of patients at the forefront of our actions and overcoming an atmosphere of worry and concern which does no good to patients and which reduces the likelihood that those in the NHS who believe themselves to be HIV-positive will come forward? Will the right hon. Lady join me in deprecating the unnecessary and provocative headlines and coverage given to those issues?

In welcoming the review announced by the Secretary of State and the chief medical officer, may I ask her to ensure that it is clear and unambiguous so as to avoid the situation which arose in Mid Glamorgan, which created fear and concern rather than reducing it? Will she assure the public of openness and clarity in the NHS so that staff and patients may feel protected and supported if they come forward for advice and treatment?

Despite her statement on the advisory committee's deliberations earlier this week, will the Secretary of State ask the committee to look again at the circumstances in which patients are asked if they will take a test but those involved in invasive surgery are not? Will she ensure that cash for HIV and AIDS education and health promotion work is not cut by the 10 per cent. projected for the coming year, but is restored and improved?

Will the Secretary of State accept the support of the whole House in putting the events of the past few weeks behind us and assuring the people of their safety and protection?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his approach to the subject, which is of understandable concern to our constituents and patients. I make it clear that the safety of patients must always be paramount. At the same time, within the health service we must be sure that all health care workers understand the guidance and that it is scrupulously followed.

The hon. Gentleman is right to make it clear that, if a climate of fear is generated, the danger is that HIV and AIDS will be driven underground and people will be reluctant to come forward for testing, whether they be patients or health care workers.

I shall certainly continue to make the maximum information available. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we are much more effective when the mass media understand the issues involved and help spread the message that HIV and AIDS are extremely serious threats to life and have to be tackled effectively, sensibly and responsibly. That is exactly my intention, and I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for taking a similar approach.

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): Will my hon. Friend accept that, while the guidelines produced by her Department are good, I am not wholly satisfied with the way in which the risk is assessed in this country? In my view, people will not come forward if they are instructed that they should alter their life style if they know that they are at high risk. This is their chosen life style. Assuring patients that all is well is accepted because there has never been a proven case, but there is suspicion if the statistics come from the same Department which assures us that the risk to heterosexuals is as great as to homosexuals. Can my

[Dame Peggy Fenner]

right hon. Friend say whether her guidance specifically includes the high-risk nature of homosexual life, because I fear that patients will not be wholly satisfied until it does?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. There is no room for euphemisms in spreading the message about HIV and AIDS. Our health education messages must be direct and meaningful, particularly to those involved in high-risk behaviour. That is clearly the case from the statistics. At the same time, HIV and AIDS are an issue which affect the whole population, albeit that the incidence is higher in particular groups. My hon. Friend is right to make it clear that we should focus our messages on the particular groups involved. For patients, the risk of infection from a health worker is minimal. Unless some invasive procedure is undertaken, the risk should not cause anxiety to the public or hon. Members.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): What guidelines has the right hon. Lady issued to health authorities and trusts about the best way to inform patients that their health worker has been infected by HIV? Will she mount a campaign to raise awareness of how HIV is contracted, particularly in the medical context, to stop patients panicking when their health worker is diagnosed HIV-positive?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady asks some pertinent questions. Only in cases where there has been an invasive procedure—in other words, where blood is involved—is HIV likely to be contracted. In any other tasks within the health service there is no risk of HIV infection. The guidance that we have provided from the centre is that a small incident team should be established, that a helpline should be introduced and that there should be a search of cases to see which may have involved invasive procedures. That has been done so far on a case-by-case basis. I have made it clear to the House today that we shall issue that guidance so that it is available readily to all health authorities.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my right hon. Friend share my perception that the Medway health authority and British Telecom jointly reacted with commendable speed and efficiency when the problems first became apparent of Mr. Shuttleworth working in the hospital? Will she take special heed of the fact that there still exists throughout the health service a curious kind of deference being paid to consultants which often weakens the effectiveness of management in applying rules to consultants which are applied rather more easily to junior staff?

Mrs. Bottomley: I commend the approach taken by the Medway health authority and the way in which it responded to the issue. I endorse my hon. Friend's comments about all health care workers and I quote from the guidance from the General Medical Council to doctors:

"It is unethical for doctors who know or believe themselves to be infected with HIV to put patients at risk by failing to seek appropriate counselling or to act upon it when given."

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Is the Secretary of State aware that there are many families in Mid Glamorgan like my own, who use the district hospitals and who are worried not so much about the medical implications of the case—because it seems that HIV will not be transmitted in any case—as about the pointless secrecy that was practised by the administration of Mid Glamorgan area health authority? Who will be brought to account for that secrecy and for the botch-up that occurred when the news filtered out and appeared in the newspapers?

Mrs. Bottomley: The Secretary of State for Wales and the Minister are here today and I know that they are still examining the circumstances of that incident. It is also a fact—I refer to cases that have occurred in England—that there is a distinction between informing patients who may have been involved and informing the public. That judgment is sensitive and in some earlier cases of which we have experience in England, we sought to make contact with patients before the matter got into the public domain, simply to reduce anxiety.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this is a two-sided matter? While it is of immense importance to protect patients and save them from unnecessary fears, doctors and nurses in the health service should themselves have protection from patients who, like the staff to whom she referred, might have reason to suppose that they have AIDS. Does she recall that I recently reminded her of the case of surgeon who cut himself during an operation and the patient refused to have an AIDS test? It takes some time for AIDS to become obvious. In such a case, the surgeon is unable for months to operate, to sleep with his wife or to follow his normal professional or private life. Does she think that that is correct?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend reminded the House of that case recently. I believe that we should all adopt a determined and practical approach to the fight against HIV and AIDS. I am pleased to say that the guidance relating to people coming forward for tests has changed over the years; although counselling is required before a test is performed, I feel that people throughout the country should be encouraged to come forward.

The expert advisory group on AIDS continues to review this and other matters. If at any stage we find a better way of protecting the public, we shall not hesitate to take further action. At present, the choice is between a somewhat coercive approach which would drive HIV and AIDS underground and a vigorous, determined approach, whereby we encourage people to come forward for tests and provide appropriate services to meet their needs if they prove to be HIV-positive.

My hon. Friend is right to remind the House of the risk that may be posed to health-care workers by HIV-infected patients.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones (Ynys Môn): Does the Secretary of State acknowledge that, if a surgeon or any other health worker contracts AIDS, it is crucial for the health authority to be absolutely open, not only with the patients but with the public? Keeping such matters in the dark heightens fear rather than allaying it.

Will the Secretary of State look at the guidelines again? If patients are told of such cases, the issue must then be in the public domain. Perhaps a simultaneous announcement is the answer.

Mrs. Bottomley: In my view, fact is much more effective than fantasy and usually less alarming. I believe that openness about such matters is very important. Questions

arise about confidentiality in regard to both patients and health care workers. We are satisfied that all health care workers understand and abide by the guidelines, I hope that it will be possible to take appropriate action without alarming the public unduly. I remind the hon. Gentleman and the House that there is no known case in this country of any patient being infected by a doctor, nurse, midwife or dentist.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): May I join my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) in congratulating Medway health authority, together with the regional health authority and, indeed, my right hon. Friend's Department, on the actions that they took when the Shuttleworth case became known last week? They have done much to assuage the worry and concern of the many people who have been Mr. Shuttleworth's patients over the years.

Will my right hon. Friend reiterate yet again that routine testing would only give us a series of snapshots showing the position of key workers infected by HIV? It would take no account of the three-month period before HIV becomes identifiable, and the results could become out of date within a few days.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is very well informed. I endorse his recognition of the skill and sensitivity with which Medway health authority handled the case.

My attitude to the testing of health care workers is one of practical common sense, as opposed to any theoretical or ideological commitment. Routine testing would involve three-monthly testing at vast numbers of health care workers and a huge risk of driving the matter underground. We shall, of course, continue to review the best way in which to tackle the issue: that is what the expert advisory group is for. At present, I share the concern of hon. Members who wish to be absolutely certain that all health care workers are aware of the guidelines and that the professional authorities will take appropriate action against any who have wilfully flouted those guidelines. They are there to protect patients.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Should not the Secretary of State have begun her statement by pointing out that there is no known case in this country of a health worker having passed on HIV? *[Interruption.]* She said that as a secondary piece of information. It is very important that she should point out that by far the greatest risk for those involved in invasive surgery is from patient to health care worker. Would not it have been helpful for her to have pointed out the absurdity of the hysteria and bigotry which is being deliberately whipped up in these circumstances because there have been no clear statements from her Ministry?

Mrs. Bottomley: It is not often that the hon. Lady makes the same statement as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight), but this is one such occasion. I thank the hon. Lady for reiterating the point that I may not have made first, but which I made several times: that there is no known case in this country of any patient being infected by a doctor, nurse, midwife or dentist.

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): I thank my right hon. Friend for her statement and welcome her commitment to putting patients first. Does she agree that common sense must prevail and that there has been only one reported case of a health worker having passed HIV to a patient and that that case involved a dentist in America? Will she confirm that the panic witnessed in this country is wholly unfounded?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for her responsible attitude. It is right that we should reassure the public that patients can be confident of their safety. My hon. Friend referred to the one case in America of a dentist whose patients were infected by contaminated equipment. I must make it clear to the House that there were special factors in that case.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): Is the Secretary of State aware of the one-day conference held earlier this year at the Royal College of Surgeons at which one surgeon, Miss Katherine Mills, pointed out that a survey in the county of Gwynedd had shown that only 25 per cent. of dentists regularly autoclaved handpieces between patients, that as many as one in four never autoclaved their handpieces at all and that only 29 per cent. sometimes wore gloves? Miss Mills' conclusion was that, these days, cost deterred dental practitioners from disposing of gloves between patients and from autoclaving their handpieces. Will the Secretary of State give a commitment that, from this day forward, all dentists will have to use a different pair of disposable gloves for each patient?

Mrs. Bottomley: I was not aware of the conference to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I shall ask the expert advisory group on AIDS to have regard to that point.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): But, after all aspects of the issue have been considered, does not my right hon. Friend agree that responsibility must lie with members of the medical profession? Should not they report it to the appropriate authority if they believe that they are in any way a risk to their patients, in accordance with the professional guidance that they have already been given?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend, who is a distinguished member of the General Medical Council, is absolutely right. I have already referred to the guidance from the GMC and now refer to that from the General Dental Council. Its guidance to dentists states:

> "By failing to obtain appropriate medical advice or to act upon the advice that has been given to them, dentists who know that they are, or believe that they may be, HIV positive and might jeopardise the well-being of their patients are behaving unethically . . . Behaviour of this kind may raise a question of serious professional misconduct."

Those are strong points. I want to ensure that all health care workers are aware of the clear guidelines published by the professional associations.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): While agreeing with the general thrust of what the Secretary of State said, may I ask her not to close her mind completely to all routine screening of some medical staff? I ask her to think for a moment not of HIV but of hepatitis B, of which we had an outbreak in Staffordshire only a few weeks ago.

Although the Secretary of State rightly says that there has been no known case of transfer of HIV from doctor to patient, in the Staffordshire case there was transfer. Certainly, there was a strong feeling locally—I think that it is shared more widely—that all the existing guidelines were followed in that case. The doctor was offered screening, but rejected it. That was an entirely proper

[Dr. Tony Wright]

procedure, but it had serious consequences. On that specific point, will the Secretary of State reconsider what she said about non-routine screening?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman rightly refers to conditions other than HIV and AIDS. There are a number of conditions which may have an adverse effect on the ability of health care workers to undertake their tasks. As for hepatitis B, we have consulted on further guidelines which we hope to issue shortly.

It is for the General Medical Council and other professional bodies to decide whether to take action in the face of a health care worker who has flagrantly disregarded advice which is there to protect patients. The chief medical officer will be discussing that subject with Sir Robert Kilpatrick when they meet shortly.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the mere fact that no other country in the world tests its health workers is no reason why we should not test our health workers? Does she also agree that the small number of health service workers who are involved in invasive procedures and who know that their sexual proclivities or non-drug abuse do not in any way mean that they will be a risk would have no reasonable or understandable grounds for refusing to take a test? Therefore, is not the case for taking a test made out? Although it would not be politically correct, it would at least have the virtue of being morally right.

Mrs. Bottomley: I am not bothered about being politically correct or incorrect: I am interested in saving patients. It is the interests of patients, purely and simply, which motivate me as the Secretary of State for Health, and the chief medical officer, working with the head of the General Medical Council, Sir Robert Kilpatrick.

If the advice changes and there appears to be merit in screening health care workers, I will have no difficulty in introducing such a policy. The present advice is that it would be counter-productive. There is some suggestion that Cuba has some compulsory screening, but Cuba is the only country which I have been able to identify. The issue is that health care workers who believe that they may have been at risk should report the matter. That is strong advice and they should act on it.

Business of the House

3.57 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 15 MARCH—Second Reading of the Disability (Grants) Bill, followed by motions relating to the National Health Service Amendment Regulations, details of which will be given in the *Official Report*.

TUESDAY 16 MARCH—My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will open his Budget statement.

WEDNESDAY 17 MARCH AND THURSDAY 18 MARCH—Continuation of the Budget debate.

FRIDAY 19 MARCH—Debate on tourism on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 22 MARCH—Conclusion of the debate on the Budget statement.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 17 March to consider European Community documents relating to Serbia and Montenegro trade embargoes.

[Monday 15 March:
NHS amendment regulations:
National Health Service (Optical Charges and Payments) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (SI 418);
National Health Service (Dental Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (SI 419);
National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Applications) (Amendment) Regulations 1993 (SI 420).

Wednesday 17 March:
Relevant European Community documents:
(a) 7150/92
(b) 7945/92 parts I and II
(c) 8365/92
(d) 8409/92
(e) 10528/92
(f) 11236/92
} *Trade embargo: Serbia and Montenegro*

Relevant reports of the European Legislation Committee:
(a)
(b)
(c)
(d)
} *HC 79-vi (1992-93);*
(c) also HC 79-xiii (1992-93);
(e) HC 79-xiii (1992-93) and HC 79-xxi (1992-93);
(f) HC 79-xv (1992-93).]

Mrs. Beckett: I thank the Lord President for that statement, particularly the riveting information about the European Community documents.

We all recognise that next week's business is likely to be dominated by the Budget, but I remind the Leader of the House that Opposition and even Conservative Members anxiously await statements on several issues. The most obvious and important is perhaps the coal industry. I

remind the right hon. Gentleman that contracts will expire on 1 April. We are anxious that an early statement be made so that we can have an opportunity to move the matter forward.

In the light of the appearance today of a report from the Social Security Advisory Committee about the position of Maxwell pensioners, many hon. Members would welcome a clear statement from the Secretary of State for Transport about whether the Government intend to make Mr. Maxwell's crime pale into insignificance by robbing millions of pounds from the British Rail pension fund.

I also ask the Leader of the House to seek a statement from the Secretary of State for Scotland which might clarify the position on Scottish water in view of the rather different statements made yesterday in the House, first by the Prime Minister and then by the Secretary of State.

May we seek some clear advice from the Home Office about the boundaries for the European parliamentary seats that will be contested in 1994? There has been some suggestion that the Boundary Commission will not be able to carry out the proposed redrafting of boundaries in time. I understand that that is not the case. The Opposition would consider it an outrage if the Boundary Commission was not allowed to carry out an examination because the Home Secretary preferred to do it himself. I hope that a statement can be made soon about that.

Will the Lord President arrange for a debate in Government time, which might be a Friday—that might be helpful to him—on the affairs of London? I know that hon. Members on both sides of the House wish to address several pertinent local issues, such as transport, the health service and so on.

Mr. Newton: In recent weeks we have shown our willingness to respond to suggestions of subjects for debate on Government Fridays. A debate on tourism was announced in the statement that I have just made. I shall bear in mind the request that the right hon. Lady has made. I shall also bring to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary her remarks about European constituency boundaries.

The right hon. Lady referred to pensions and transport. She may have failed to notice what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport said recently. He assured hon. Members that they could take it that the Government would in no way countenance the funds of British Rail pension schemes being used for purposes other than paying pensions to those entitled to them. He went on to say clearly that recent reports in the press were mischievous and unwarranted scares which showed no concern for the pensioners. I hope that the right hon. Lady will accept that and will do nothing more to encourage those unwarranted scares.

On water in Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made it clear in an interview in *The Scotsman* this morning, with which the right hon. Lady may not have had time to catch up, that the Government would take full account of Scottish circumstances and that all the responses would be carefully considered. We will, of course, await the outcome of consultations before taking any proposals forward.

Lastly, the right hon. Lady referred to coal. I shall not attempt to add to what my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade said in the debate a couple of days ago. However, I make the general observation that there would be more time for debating matters if the Opposition did not behave in the way in which they behaved in the House last night.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that, at an early date, we shall hold an urgent debate on the links between violent offences against the individual and violent scenes on television and through the agency of the video machine? Does he agree that, to many young people, violence shown on television is seen as a form of entertainment, and has therefore become part of accepted behaviour? We need to debate not the definition of the problem but the need to curb the showing of violent scenes on television.

Mr. Newton: As this matter has been raised on a number of occasions recently by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and, only this afternoon, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, my hon. Friend will know that the Government share his views. It is absolutely right that my hon. Friend should once again articulate the feelings of many people in the country. I cannot promise an early debate on precisely the lines that he seeks, but I assure him that the Government will do everything that they can to advance responsible consideration of those matters by those concerned.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): Does the Leader of the House realise that it is now nearly five years since we had the last debate on tourism, during which time hon. Members on both sides have expressed considerable concern about the discrimination against England? The right hon. Gentleman may be aware that the figures per head for the promotion of tourism from Government funds are more than £8 in Northern Ireland, more than £5 in Wales, more than £3 in Scotland and only 42p in England. In those circumstances, will the right hon. Gentlemans consider whether, under Standing Order No. 100, he should reconstitute the Standing Committee on Regional Affairs to examine this question?

Mr. Newton: I take the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question as congratulation on arranging such a debate. Like many others, I look forward to the contribution that he will seek to make on Friday week.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): Is the Government's defeat on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill on Monday night likely to affect the dates that my right hon. Friend has already announced for the Easter and Spring recesses, and will it affect the date on which the House will rise for the summer recess?

Mr. Newton: Recess dates are always announced with the well-known phrase, "subject to the progress of business". It cannot be said, however, that every hon. Member shows much sign of wishing to make such progress. I should not wish to advise hon. Members to book an early summer holiday.

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): Of the 5,000 job losses that Rolls-Royce announced today, 1,400 are in Bristol, which has been recognised by the European Community as the most defence-dependent urban area in Europe. Male unemployment in part of my constituency is now 43 per cent. Will the Leader of the House find time for an emergency debate, the effect of which would be to give assisted area status to the county of Avon?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady will perhaps not be surprised that, despite the fact that she has understandably raised the matter, I cannot promise the early debate that she seeks, but she will know that the assisted areas map is being reviewed, and no doubt she will ensure that her representations are taken into account.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider his last reply? Does he recall that the Procedure Committee, bearing in mind Scottish Members of Parliament in particular, urged that we should not run late in the summer? If there is a need for extra Government business, we should reduce the recesses at Easter and Whitsun rather than putting Scottish Members at a disadvantage.

Mr. Newton: I note my right hon. Friend's point. At this stage I do not wish to add to what I have said, but many other hon. Members may be inconvenienced by changes to the provisional dates that have been announced. I meant no more in my earlier remarks than to make the obvious point that, if large groups of people in the House set out to frustrate the progress of business, the Government will inevitably have to take that into account when planning the progress of business.

Mr. Jimmy Wray (Glasgow, Provan): Will the Leader of the House consider initiating a discussion of early-day motion 1570?

[That this House notes the utter chaos and confusion between the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Scotland over the future of Scotland's water and sewerage services; recalls that on 9th March the Prime Minister stated that he had no reason to doubt that water privatisation in Scotland will be effective and efficient, Official Report, column 783, and that less than one hour later the Secretary of State for Scotland denied any such commitment; further notes that more chaos was created when the Prime Minister, in reply to the same question, refused to rule out the disconnection of water supplies being legalised in Scotland, despite repeated public assurances by the Secretary of State for Scotland that he had no plans to do so; believes that the Government's so-called consultation on the future of water and sewerage services has now been exposed as a sham; calls upon Her Majesty's Government to clarify its position and to recognise that the overwhelming majority of Scots strongly oppose the privatisation or franchising of these services; and expresses the hope that the Secretary of State for Scotland will not further exploit the opportunism of the SNP by negotiating any behind the scenes deals on this vital issue.]

The Prime Minister mentioned the matter yesterday, and said when Scottish water would be privatised. In view of the mistakes that have been made south of the border when we were misled and were told that the people who would invest in water would not invest in casinos or hotels, and in view of the 50,000 disconnections south of the border, we do not want privatisation or franchising in Scotland. We want the Prime Minister to get that message good and clear and not to adopt a dictatorial attitude.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will, in his usual well-considered way, take account of the hon. Gentleman's representations as part of his consultation.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, perhaps as we speak, an awesome tragedy is unfolding in Russia? If the situation in Russia continues to deteriorate, serious repercussions may affect us all and dwarf virtually any other subject for discussion in this House. Is this not the time to send a clear signal to Boris Yeltsin and the Russian people——

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand that the House may have some sympathy with the hon. Gentleman's comments. However, we are dealing with next week's business. If he can put his comments in that context, we would like to hear them.

Mr. Butcher: I would welcome a statement, because the subject could not be more topical or more urgent. Is it not time that we sent a signal from this House to the Russian people that we admire them, that we want to see them part of Europe, that we admire their culture and science, that we want to send a trade mission and that we want to welcome them into the international community? If we do not act now, we may have a very serious international situation on our hands.

Mr. Newton: In his own way, my hon. Friend has perhaps sent that signal by what he has said. On behalf of the Government, I can say that we believe that President Yeltsin has embarked on courageous, democratic and economic reforms. We strongly support them, and we want to see reform continue.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): Although I welcome the announcement that European Standing Committee B will meet next week to examine a raft of papers relating to Bosnia-Herzegovina, may I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the fact that that Committee has not met for more than three weeks and that there is an enormous backlog of European documents for it to examine? Why are the Government so dilatory in organising meetings of European Standing Committee B? Does the Leader of the House consider it to be unimportant? Will he ensure that it meets regularly to catch up on the backlog of scrutiny with which it is charged?

Mr. Newton: I certainly take note of the hon. Gentleman's representations. Meanwhile, the hon. Gentleman no doubt listened to the long list of documents that I read out today. I am glad to say that European Standing Committee B should at least be kept busy next week.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): Would it be possible to fit in a debate next week on Rolls-Royce Aerospace? While all Conservative Members deeply regret job losses, it is worth pointing out that that is a highly successful company which has doubled its share of world markets in the past 10 years. That is in stark contrast to the situation in the 1960s, and 1970s, when the company was in deep trouble and had to be taken into state ownership because of its problems as a result of intervention by the Wilson Government to make the company provide engines for the Tristar. That was a totally unsustainable contract. The last thing that we want to do is to provide the kind of subsidies which have created a huge, bloated and corrupt state sector in Italy and France and which have created unsuccessful, loss-making national champions like Philips in Holland.

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend was speaking, it struck me how much his remarks chimed with some of the points

that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made just under an hour ago. My hon. Friend might well find an opportunity to make further and more extensive comments during the Budget debate next week, should he be successful in catching your eye, Madam Speaker.

Mr. David Wilmick (Walsall, North): Does the Leader of the House recognise that he has a responsibility when organising the business to ensure that there is full and proper consideration on such a vital constitutional issue as the European Communities (Amendment) Bill? If there is any abuse by the Government through deals with the Liberal Democrats or anyone else, scenes such as those last night are bound to be repeated because the Opposition have an absolute right to the consideration that we demand, whether we are for or against Maastricht. The Leader of the House should bear that in mind if he is proposing any deal over Friday's business. There is a strong rumour that the Government are out to destroy Friday's business as it is embarrassing to them.

Mr. Newton: I cannot remember, although it sounds likely, whether the hon. Gentleman was present last night. However, whether or not he was here, I can tell him that I shall not listen to lectures about the responsible conduct of public business in the House from people who took part in what happened last night.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate next week on early-day motion 1222, which has been signed by many hon. Members on both sides of the House?

[That this House deplores the growing number of vicious and mutilating attacks upon horses; notes the appalling suffering this causes to the dumb animals in question; and calls upon all who have a responsibility for or care about the welfare of horses and other animals to spare no effort to stamp out this sick and evil practice forthwith.]

It concerns sexual attacks on and mutilation of horses which are now becoming more widespread. Horses are being killed in the most disgusting and disgraceful and meanest possible way. The House should discuss the matter, and something should be done.

Mr. Newton: I cannot promise an early debate, but I share my hon. Friend's abhorrence of these vicious and horrific attacks. I am glad to say that the Hampshire constabulary has set up a special squad of officers in an attempt to carry forward the prevention of such offences and the discovery and prosecution of those who commit them.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): is the Leader of the House aware of magazines such as *US Cavalry*, featuring illegal and offensive weapons, which is being sent as unsolicited mail through the letterboxes of homes in the United Kingdom? At the same time as we are introducing legislation in Scotland on knives, people can now buy illegal weapons from the privacy of their own homes, using a dedicated telephone number and credit card system. Therefore, to ensure that our streets are safer, will the Leader of the House provide time for a debate on illegal weapons such as Italian stilettos which are described in the magazine as having a convincing and sophisticated action? That is wrong.

Mr. Newton: I was not aware of that magazine. Apart from mentioning to the hon. Gentleman that we provided time for a debate on crime in the House very recently, I will undertake to draw to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary the magazine to which the hon. Gentleman has adverted and what he says about its contents.

Mr. Roy Thomason (Bromsgrove): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on the appalling conduct of Opposition Members yesterday and their demonstration of verbal violence? Will he endeavour to ensure through the normal channels that, if such conduct is repeated in the House, it should take place after 9 o'clock when the watershed on television ensures that the public are mature enough to see demonstrations of that nature?

Mr. Newton: The same thought occurred to me as has evidently occurred to my hon. Friend. What happened last night did rather less than nothing for the attempts of the Opposition to parade themselves as the party of law and order.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Whatever may have appeared in *The Scotsman* or any other newspaper, is the House not entitled to a personal statement from the Prime Minister explaining his reply to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on Tuesday that water privatisation in Scotland would be effective and efficient, as elsewhere? Does not the statement by the Secretary of State for Scotland that a final decision on water privatisation would not be taken until all the responses to the consultation document had been fully considered demonstrate yet again that, with his phoney stock taking exercise and his prejudicial reply on water privatisation, the Prime Minister is treating the people of Scotland with absolute contempt?

Mr. Newton: I understand why the hon. Gentleman feels it necessary to make that sort of remark. I shall simply say that I do not accept it for a moment.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): It is refreshing to hear my right hon. Friend announce business for next week that is entirely British in nature and content. Will he look into the urgent necessity for a debate on the Royal Navy? Apart from one single-service day in June 1991, there has not been a debate on the Royal Navy in Government time or more than three years. Given the proposed transfer of sea training to Portland and the necessity to order an LPH for the Royal Marines, we need parliamentary backing for the sort of naval programme that the nation requires.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's request and the reasons for it. I have not done too badly in recent weeks in finding time for debating both service and foreign matters. There are obvious difficulties in the near future, but I would not wish to rule out a response at a later stage to my hon. Friend's request.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): May I press the Leader of the House on the need for a statement next week on the future of the coal industry? Is he aware that the miners of Taff Merthyr want to dig and win the economic reserves that are available at the pit to supply Aberthaw power station to enable it to provide the energy that the nation needs? At the moment they are

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being paid to do nothing. Instead of procrastinating, why do not the Government make a statement to reprieve profitable pits such as Taff Merthyr?

Mr. Newton: I have already referred once this afternoon to the remarks in this context of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade a couple of days ago. I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that my right hon. Friend will be in the Chamber to answer questions next Wednesday.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend draw the Opposition's antics last night to the attention of the Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure, perhaps with the help of Madam Speaker and Mr. Deputy Speaker? Does he agree that the extraordinary antics of last night—wearing paper hats, moving around as votes were being taken and so on—demonstrate that Opposition Members hold the House in complete contempt? If such antics were shown on our television screens as happening in Parliaments in Spain, Portugal and Greece, some of my right hon. and hon. Friends would be saying that that was evidence of how incompetent and stupid those Parliaments were.

Mr. Newton: I am bound to observe that I saw some pictures of the Italian Parliament yesterday that might relate to some of my hon. Friend's comments. I have already made several comments about the basic thrust of her remarks. The Chairman of the Select Committee on Procedure, my right hon. Friend the Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery), has had his attention drawn to the matter because he heard my hon. Friend's remarks; and he nodded wisely when he heard them.

Mrs. Irene Adams (Paisley, North): Will the Leader of the House provide time next week for the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement on the decline of manufacturing industry in Scotland? Given today's announcement that Rolls-Royce is to shed a further 500 jobs in my constituency and the decline of manufacturing jobs generally in my constituency—78 per cent. between 1979 and 1989—it is most urgent that the Secretary of State gives the House an assurance on the future of manufacturing in Scotland.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady would perhaps be rather surprised if I were to respond in the way that she would like, given that we have recently had a full day's debate on manufacturing industry. I understand why she has raised the matter, but I remind her of what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said during Prime Minister's Question Time about redundancies at Pratt and Whitney, a major engine maker. It needs to be recognised that the redundancies are part of much wider problems than the hon. Lady recognises.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): It was helpful of my right hon. Friend some weeks ago to give the dates of the Easter and spring recesses. Is he aware that the Admission Order Office has been given instructions to take no bookings post-Easter until my right hon. Friend has formally confirmed the dates of the recesses? He has not done so today. Is he now in a position to do so? If he is not, will he be able to do so next week?

Mr. Newton: I am somewhat puzzled by what I have just heard, and I shall make further inquiries about the matter. As I understand it, the situation is as it has always been. The dates of recesses are announced by the Leader of the House, using time-honoured phraseology referring to the fact that recesses are subject to the progress of business. What confirms the arrangements is not a further statement by the Leader of the House but the acceptance of an Adjournment motion by the House itself, usually only a day or two beforehand.

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): I do not know whether the Leader of the House is aware of the fact that, after a good deal of pushing yesterday by Opposition Members, the Secretary of State for Health finally agreed to publish a number of reports on financial scandals surrounding the West Midlands health authority. In view of this decision and of the increasing public concern about the way in which health authorities, not only in the west Midlands but also in Wessex and elsewhere, are operating and about financial scandals, will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the need for health authority accountability? Or are the Government interested in accountability only if it is not their own political supporters who are involved?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman refers to the action that has been promised by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. It seems to me that my right hon. Friend's promise indicates both openness and accountability. I take note of what the hon. Member has said, but I cannot promise a debate in the near future.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): May I underline the request made from the Opposition Front Bench for an early debate on London? I expect that the reasons for my request are different from those of the Opposition. First, there is the lingering and rather large problem of corruption in local government, especially in London, about which we have still heard nothing from the Department of the Environment. Secondly, there is the question of the totally needless disruption of bus services in London this week by strikers.

Mr. Newton: I note the points that my hon. Friend would clearly wish to raise in a debate. I made what I hope was a tolerably forthcoming reply to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), but I cannot be sure when it will be possible to provide time for a debate.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The Leader of the House will have heard concern expressed from all quarters about the decline of manufacturing industry. Could he organise for next week a statement about how the Government's policy affects British shipbuilders and repairers, who are not benefiting from the same subventions as their European counterparts?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Gentleman's point. He will be aware that in all countries of the Community help of this kind is supposed to proceed in line with similar rules. However, I shall make sure that the hon. Gentleman's remarks are directed to the attention of my right hon. Friend. As for debating time, I should point out that virtually the entire programme that I announced today is concerned, in a sense, with economic matters. Thus, the hon. Gentleman may get his opportunity next week.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I wonder whether, in the light of previous questions, my right hon. Friend agrees that, bearing in mind 1,000 years of history, the submerging of unconsulted people in an unwanted and unstable European union is much more important than when, or whether, this House has any recesses.

Mr. Newton: I have to confess to my hon. Friend, who is an understandably persistent questioner about these matters, that I am a little surprised that, following weeks of complaint about debate on the European Communities (Amendment) Bill—that is how I interpreted his questions in previous weeks—he is now complaining about the absence of such debate.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the Lord President arrange for a statement to clarify exactly who is in charge of the privatisation of Scottish water? Is it the Prime Minister, who on Tuesday confirmed privatisation, the Secretary of State for Scotland, who on Wednesday denied that a decision had been made, or the house journal of the Tory party—the *Daily Express*—which on Thursday referred to franchising? Who is in charge of this policy shambles?

Mr. Newton: Earlier I referred to a matter that the hon. Gentleman has not mentioned—an interview given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, published this morning in *The Scotsman*, which I have not normally heard described as the house magazine of the Conservative party.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson (Aberdeen, South): I should like to draw my right hon. Friend's attention back to the events in this Chamber last night, when Labour Members sought to defeat orders relating to Scottish business. Had they been successful, the cost to Scottish business, in terms of jobs, investment and rates, would have been horrendous.

Will my right hon. Friend consider providing time for a debate on this matter next week to find out, first, why the Opposition bleat day in, day out, about jobs, but threatened Scottish jobs by their action last night; and, secondly, why, although the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), as her party's spokeswoman, when the statutory instruments were debated in Committee gave every one of them her full support, in the Chamber the Opposition sought to defeat them?

Mr. Newton: That is a very helpful question. It is quite proper that the House should be reminded that, had the Opposition succeeded in frustrating the passage of the orders last night, the effect would have been that the mining and quarrying industry and some other industrial sectors in Scotland would have experienced a 20 per cent. increase in their rates, and the oil-related and petrochemical plants in Scotland would, I understand, have had an 85 per cent. increase in their rates.

Mr. Bernie Grant (Tottenham): Will the Leader of the House find time next week for a debate on racism in British society? Has he seen my early-day motion 1527 about the conduct of his hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), who last week on television talked about niggers in a woodpile?

[That this House is appalled by the use of the term 'nigger in a woodpile' by the honourable Member of Bridlington on BBC Television's Westminster Live Programme on Wednesday 3rd March; is reminded of the derogatory origins of this phrase, and is aware of the offensiveness of such language to Britain's black community; and calls upon the honourable Member to make an apology to that community for his racist language.]

Does the Leader of the House agree with me that that is a derogatory term which is offensive to black people? Will he take this opportunity of dissociating himself from his hon. Friend's remarks?

Mr. Newton: While I did not see that interview and must therefore accept the way in which the hon. Gentleman has put it, I can only say that, knowing my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend), I am quite sure that he did not intend to give racist offence in the way that is suggested.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Could time be found next week for an urgent statement about the plight of people who work in the mining industry? Every day they are breaking productivity records, but the Leader of the House will know that their extended redundancy scheme ends on 27 March—16 days away. Is it not time to back the people who are making those records and back off closing down the mining industry?

Mr. Newton: This is the latest of many occasions on which the problems of the coal industry have been raised during business questions. I do not complain about that, but I cannot add to what I said on earlier occasions.

Mr. Mike Hall (Warrington, South): I refer the Leader of the House to early-day motion 1158.

[That this House recognises the valuable contribution made to the well being of the United Kingdom over many years by senior citizens; furthermore notes that many of Britain's pensioners will find the television licences priced at £82·88 from April an expensive price to pay; and therefore calls upon the Government to exempt pensioners from the television licence fee with effect from 1st April.]

It calls for recognition by the House of the contribution of pensioners to the well-being of this country, notes that from 1 April pensioners will face an increase in their television licences to £82·88, and calls upon the Government to exempt all pensioners from buying a TV licence from 1 April. Will the Leader of the House bring the motion to the attention of the Chancellor of the Exchequer before he completes the preparation of his Budget?

Mr. Newton: Since the hon. Gentleman has related his remarks to the Budget, he will not be surprised when I say two things: first, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend; and, secondly, it is not a matter on which I am prepared to venture just a few days in advance.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. We must now move on.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Traditionally, business questions are an opportunity for Back Benchers to make legitimate demands for debates. I notice that during today's business questions there have been far more hon. Members present and rising on the Opposition Benches than on the Government Benches. You have allowed questions to run on a little to exhaust requests from Government Back Benchers. Do you not think it would be fairer if every hon.

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

Member who wished to put a question could do so? That would result in extending business questions by only about 10 minutes and would give us an opportunity to raise matters.

Madam Speaker: I time business questions very carefully indeed. It is not often that I am in a position to call every Member on both sides of the House who wishes to speak. When Members on the Government Benches have been satisfied and are no longer rising, I continue to call Members on the Opposition Benches; but I also have to keep in mind the day's business. There are occasions when I am able to call all Members who wish to speak, but there are occasions when I have to call a halt. Regrettably, this is one of those occasions.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that what the Opposition did last night was strictly in accordance with the rules of the House; that it was quite proper to vote on the statutory instruments and that we were in number more than we are at present? In 1975 I raised a question about invoking Standing Order No. 39 when only 13 Liberals were voting continually. I was told by the then Speaker that 13 was a sufficient number to justify voting in the Lobbies. Why is it that last night we were stopped from voting in the Lobbies when 40 Members were marching through them, Back Benchers and Front Benchers alike? It is time the record was put straight. The Opposition have got the Government on the run, and we have every right to hound them until we drive them out of office.

Madam Speaker: The Chair of the House never conducts reviews of the previous day's business.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker. Will you confirm that, under the Standing Orders of the House, any affirmative resolution on statutory instruments which are allowed to go upstairs is not a resolution on the instrument itself but is only to report to the House that the instrument has been debated—that and no more? If hon. Members have any doubt, there is the alternative under the Standing Orders that they can insist on a debate being taken on the Floor of the House, in which every hon. Member can take part, with a vote at the end.

In view of the unwarranted criticisms flowing from Members on the Government Benches, it seems a good alternative that we should deal with affirmative instruments on the Floor of the House on every occasion.

Madam Speaker: What the hon. Gentleman has said about procedure is correct. Over the years he has had a great deal to do with statutory instruments, and still has. He knows the procedure very well.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Are you aware that, during Prime Minister's Question Time, in reply to the first question about redundancies at Rolls-Royce, the Prime Minister —inadvertently, I am sure—misled the House by saying that Boeing and Pratt and Whitney were the main engine competitors of Rolls-Royce? Will you kindly call in the Prime Minister and tell him that Boeing manufactures airframes, not engines? Clearly someone who does not know the difference between his Boeing and his General Electric should not be Prime Minister of this country.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman credits me with more authority than I have. I suspect that he is attempting to continue the debate, particularly as I recognise that he did not catch my eye during questions.

Mr. Banks: I do not mind; I do not complain.

Madam Speaker: Perhaps next time.

Orders of the Day

European Communities (Amendment) Bill

Considered in Committee [Progress, 8 March]

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

TREATY ON EUROPEAN UNION

Amendment proposed [8 March]: No. 29, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 3(b) on page 10 of Cm. 1934 relating to the principle of subsidiarity.)'.—*[Mr. George Robertson.]*

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): I remind the Committee that we are also considering the following amendments: No. 77, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(other than Article 3b)'.

No. 105, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(except Article 3b on page 10 of Cm. 1934).'

No. 126, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert '(excluding Article G B(5) on page 10 of Cm. 1934).'.

No. 340, in clause 1, page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except the second paragraph of Article 3b on page 10 of Cm 1934'.

4.38 pm

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. Have you had any intimation from Ministers that a statement is to be made to the Committee about the discussions and the decision in the European Parliament this week arising from the De Gucht report? On a vote of 207 to 80 it was agreed that there should be a uniform electoral procedure to the European Parliament by a system of proportional representation. Such a statement would be relevant to our consideration of the Maastricht treaty. Have you received any word about that from the Government, or is it appropriate that the Government should make a statement about whether they intend to use the British veto?

The Chairman: I have received no such request.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Morris. We are about to debate the subject of subsidiarity—one of the most important aspects of the treaty and something the Government say secures the interests of the United Kingdom. I asked the Prime Minister during Question Time whether the principle of subsidiarity would allow this House, and this House alone, to make the decision on the 48-hour week. The Prime Minister, understandably, was unable at that time to answer the question. There is no complaint about that, but as it is the kernel of this debate, would it be possible to have the Attorney-General here so that all questions of this sort, on these vitally important matters, can have an authoritative reply?

The Chairman: The hon. Gentleman should open his eyes.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): When the debate ended on Monday evening, I was agreeing with the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that subsidiarity will in no way arrest the growing centralisation of decision-making within the European Community. I shall hope to demonstrate that that statement is a fact. Amendment No. 29, the leading amendment in this group, properly calls for the removal of article 3b. Why properly? I shall endeavour to explain my view. I put the question to my hon. and right hon. Friends: what is the legal meaning of subsidiarity? We know that the Edinburgh declaration explained:

"Subsidiarity is a dynamic concept and should be applied in the light of the objectives set out in the treaty. It allows Community action to be expanded where circumstances so require."

But I would say that that is everything to everybody and to all people it can be whatever they want it to be. I was told at a dinner the other evening by a lawyer that he has never seen anything quite so impossible to define in law.

I submit that subsidiarity, as explained in Edinburgh, instead of being purely a decentralising concept, is, as stated in Edinburgh, and can be, used—I claim, will be used—to widen Community powers.

Based on experience, can anyone seriously deny that the effect of the Single European Act has been the widening of Community powers? Was this not all about the achieving of the objectives of that Act? I say that because it is objectives that come in with article 3b. When matters have gone to the European Court of Justice, have we not seen the court decide in favour of the objectives? That is very important.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones), has already conceded that the court has traditionally been a centralising institution. We did not need him to tell us that. We all knew that. I know that my right hon. Friend now has a vision of a changed European Court of Justice and that he believes

"it is not fair to assume that the court will necessarily and at all times make centralising judgments."—[*Official Report,* 27 January 1993; Vol. 217, c. 1058.]

He claims that he can see clear signs of a change of emphasis and he believes that the trend will be reinforced by the Maastricht treaty. I for one do not believe that. Nor have I seen any evidence to support my right hon. Friend's view. It is like going before a hanging, pleading for mercy and for a change of his standard hanging policy and saying in mitigation—Scots will understand me—"I didnae ken, my lord," and the judge replying, with great compassion, as they always do, "Weel, ye ken noo."

The plain truth is that I think that is what will happen when we come before the European Court of Justice. Does anyone seriously believe that the court will not take note of what is happening under the social chapter in the other 11 states? If by chance we had another Hoover experience and the Commission or the aggrieved state losing the jobs, decided to take the case to the court, would not the court be persuaded in favour of that aggrieved state?

I submit that subsidiarity will be no defence in these circumstances. On the contrary, it strengthens this treaty basis and the court is more likely to decide that the United Kingdom should conform because it is

"necessary to achieve the objectives of the treaty"

as stated in article 3b.

4.45 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I can well understand the hon. Gentleman's point about the decision of the European Court of Justice in the case he mentioned, but is it not probable that many people, including even our own Prime Minister, were misinformed initially, some time ago, about the nature of subsidiarity. The Prime Minister said:

"an article that specifically enshrines the crucial concept that the Community should undertake only those measures that could not be achieved at a national level."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1991; Vol. 201, c. 278.]

That was the Prime Minister's view of what it was about, but does the hon. Member agree that that applies only when there is no exclusive competence and only when it is thought to be better achieved? That is a matter of judgment.

Mr. Walker: I hope in the course of my remarks to amplify that very point. It is because of these matters that that article 3b should be seen in that light and the amendment to remove it supported.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): Has my hon. Friend read the *Daily Mail* this morning, which says that the European Parliament voted last night to outlaw the culinary use of lettering on Blackpool and Brighton rock? With the study that he has made of the subsidiarity clause, can my hon. Friend tell us how we go about preventing the EC outlawing the culinary use of lettering on Blackpool and Brighton rock? I am not sure. Will my hon. Friend give me some guidance as to how we can go about this?

Mr. Walker: I am grateful for that helpful comment but I cannot give my hon. Friend any guidance because we cannot find any means by which guidance can be introduced or implemented and that is another reason for supporting amendment No. 29. If that is not enough justification, I suggest that we look further at what was said at Edinburgh:

"Only to the extent that the treaty gives the institution concerned the choice of when to act"

We all know that the Commission, led by Jacques Delors, will make proposals to the Council of Ministers. That body will effectively decide, when it enacts legislation, how to implement subsidiarity. I suggest that that will happen because nobody will or can deny that the council has the will, and with the qualified majority, it will find the way. All experience shows us that that is how things are achieved.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I am listening carefully to my hon. Friend and to what was said about colouring matter in food. Is that not the very reason why we need subsidiarity? Are not all the examples he has given those of problems caused by not having subsidiarity in the first place? It will have been written in had we been involved in the first place. We now very much need it and he should vote for it.

Mr. Walker: If my hon. Friend will be a little patient, I will continue and then I shall ask her to consider whether what I have been saying is distorted and wrong. I am always prepared to mend my erring ways. My wife will confirm that.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Would my hon. Friend remind our hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) that, sadly, the clause makes it clear that subsidiarity, even if it did work—and I do not see that it will—only applies in areas where the EC does not have exclusive competence. As food is obviously an area where the EC does have exclusive competence, this could not apply. It is down here in black and white, unless the Lord Advocate can tell us differently. It seems quite clear, but even if it did apply, what we want to know is how we go about saving Blackpool rock.

Mr. Walker: I believe that we will see many more examples of that. I cannot believe that article 3b as worded will do other than strengthen the Council's hand. Where the Council has the will, it will have its way. That is our experience.

In such circumstances it is not realistic for a member state, particularly the United Kingdom, to invoke subsidiarity to prevent a directive being forced upon it. The court will simply throw it out. Once the Council has decided, there will be no case for a member state to make. That is particularly important in regard to the social chapter where the so-called United Kingdom opt-out will not protect British employers from the combined effect of the Single European Act and article 3b.

When my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary wrote in a letter to *The Sunday Times* on 22 November that subsidiarity is

"an important legally binding constraint on Community action",

he should have explained that the only constraint that subsidiarity provides is that which the Council is prepared to impose upon itself.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is it not instructive to read the terms under which the European court was set up, because they make it clear that the court has one single duty above all: to ensure that the treaties are applied? Far from subsidiarity being clear, it is obvious that the court will interpret it narrowly as requiring all member states to do exactly the same.

Mr. Walker: I agree with the hon. Lady.

As we now know, there is no protection from the working-time directive through subsidiarity, nor is there any protection for the bilateral and important civil air agreements, about which I shall have more to say.

The protocol on social policy provides that the other 11 states should enact their social chapter policies through the Council of Ministers. If the other 11 vote to impose social costs upon themselves, subsidiarity will be no protection for the United Kingdom and will not stop the other 11 from out-voting the 12th state, the United Kingdom, thus ensuring that we have to face the same costs and bear the same burden. If the other 11 satisfy themselves that the proposed action passes the subsidiarity test, there will be no reason to allow the United Kingdom to be an exception, particularly if we have more Hoover-type experiences.

I remind the Committee that articles 2, 3 and 5 provide the basc context for Community objectives, which are economic and social cohesion and solidarity among member states. So it is simply a question of going to one of the majority voting provisions, such as article 118a, and asking the court to stretch the meaning, as has happened in other areas of Community law.

Also, the protocol, or so-called opt-out, is not part of the main body of the text in one regard. It says nothing which affects essentially the means by which people will

import social provisions. Words to that effect are not there, but that is what is meant. That cannot be a basis for anyone to suggest that articles 2, 3 and 5 will not be used; I believe that they will be. Consequently we are not opting out of any social provisions contained in the Single European Act or the treaty of Rome.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, a man whom I admire greatly and who has a better understanding of what is happening with the people of Europe than many of his colleagues, said in the debate earlier this week:

"I do not think that there is any great disagreement. Of course, we have had problems with the legal reach of the existing treaties in the social sphere. The working-time directive is one example. However, the fact that there are problems with the existing arrangements does not mean that one should multiply—double, triple, quadruple—those problems by adopting a treaty base that would turn what is now an exception into an everyday affair."

He went on to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin)

"is making a fascinating and able speech. It is fascinating because it is outside the debate that has been taking place inside the Community for the past two years . . .

The point is that it is not so long ago when what my hon. Friend is challenging, objecting to and saying is inevitable was orthodox. People believed in the centralising tendency. Every advance made towards Community jurisdiction was judged a good thing in itself. That has changed. I accept that the change is not perfect and that there are people around who hold to the old view. However, it is a little out of date for my hon. Friend to look from outside the institutions of the Community and say that things cannot be challenged or changed by member states. Of course it is only member states who give power to the Community, as my hon. Friend acknowledged when he explained the first sentence of article 3b.

What is happening now, however—I ask my hon. Friend to take my word for it—is that the different institutions are changing. That is reflected in article 3b, the Edinburgh declaration, the activities of the Commission and the sharp reduction in the number of legislative proposals coming forward. That is political fact before it is a legal obligation."

It is important that I read this, Mr. Morris; you will understand why when I make my next observations:

"We have the option to say that such changes are not any good, to be cynical and to say, 'They would say that, wouldn't they?' We have the option to reject the changes, but that would be a mistake, because our arguments are beginning to bear fruit and here they are."—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 746-7.]

So said my right hon. Friend on Monday. In shorthand, he asked us to look at what was happening and to take his word that the institutions are changing. I agree with my right hon. Friend that in the last two years there has indeed been change. The people of France, Ireland and Denmark have voted, and they have changed. Sadly, I do not believe that the political leaders, who compose the Council and the Commission, have changed.

Why do I say that? Several of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North, paid a recent visit to the Commission, where they discovered that no one believes that the opt-out would prevent the United Kingdom from being forced to accept most, if not every, aspect of the social chapter. My hon. Friends also discovered that officials and politicians believed that the move towards union was continuing, regardless of what was being said by Ministers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stephen Milligan (Eastleigh): My hon. Friend says that the Commission has not changed. Is he aware that in the last year the number of proposals put forward to the Council by the Commission has diminished by more than 50 per cent., that the Commission has drawn up a list of more than 20 directives that are to be scrapped and that the Commission is scrapping many other existing proposals? Does he not welcome all that as a step in the right direction?

Mr. Walker: Of course I welcome it, but I draw attention to critical and important key areas. We all know that politicians endeavour to put on an acceptable front during periods of uncertainty, such as periods immediately before general elections; I suggest that the passing of the treaty has a similar impact throughout Europe.

If my earlier comments have not been enough to cast doubt on the view that the centralising tendency has been reversed, let me give another concrete example. Everyone who has studied the treaty of Rome, the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty, is aware that transport, particularly in article 3f of Maastricht, is an area of European competence. Hon. Members will also be aware that in transport in Europe the move towards open skies has been, and still is, slow and painful. They will also be aware that a United Kingdom success story over the last 20 years or more has been the completion of many valuable bilateral air service agreements.

All have been negotiated by United Kingdom Ministers and Department of Transport officials. The Commission and its officials have not been responsible for those important and highly prized aviation freedom rights. Because we have had such effective and efficient negotiators, the United Kingdom has probably the best air transport operations in Europe, if not in the world.

5 pm

Enlightened civil aviation policy in the United Kingdom has created more viable and profitable airlines in this country than in any other Community state. Skilled negotiations via bilateral agreements have created at Heathrow the world's busiest international airport. That is a splendid example of subsidiarity in operation. It should be used in the new enlightened Europe as a model for every other member state.

Based on the comments by my right hon. Friend to which I referred, I would expect our new and enlightened Community friends to support that continuing subsidiarity. Sadly, experience leads one to a different conclusion. The Commission, no doubt encouraged by enlightened members of the Council of Ministers, is determined to take over the negotiations for air service agreements.

I attended a conference on open skies in Europe and listened to a lady representing the Commission. She had spent three years working on the paper that she presented. At the end of her presentation, I felt it necessary to tell her that I had heard a better paper given by a sixth former. If that represents the level of negotiations, I shudder. Even so, the Commission has the power to take over, as my right hon. Friend said, because of the legal reach of existing treaties. So where is the example of the new, non-centralising action of the Commission in that important sphere for the United Kingdom?

Mrs. Currie: I agree with my hon. Friend's assessment, but does he agree that the success of air travel in Britain has been due to the fact that we privatised the airlines and the airports, which is not common practice in most countries, particularly in Europe? Does he agree that it would be wise for us to encourage that type of

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[Mrs. Currie]

monumental change, which results in better business practice and awareness of the interests of customers? If so, how shall we be able to encourage our European colleagues to follow our example if we are not at the heart of Europe?

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend has a great gift for jumping feet first into areas of which she has little knowledge, as she just demonstrated. I referred to enlightened aviation policy, in which I included the privatisation of British Airways and so on. I did not go into the detail of the matter because I am anxious not to filibuster. I am concentrating on the facts. Bilateral negotiations are conducted by Department of Transport Ministers and officials, who are the best chaps in the world to conduct them. We should not allow such activities to be taken over by the Community.

Where is the example of the new, non-centralising action of the Commission? The truth is that nothing of substance has changed in the institutions of the Community. Subsidiarity and opt-outs were, and are, designed to give the impression of change. In reality, just as many of the concerns which were pooh-poohed during the passage of the Single European Act will come back to haunt us, so that the so-called opt-outs and subsidiarity will be found to be of little substance.

Amendment 29 should be accepted because subsidiarity, like most things to do with the European Community, has been oversold. Anyone with experience of selling knows that, when a product or service is oversold, the consumer backlash can be dramatic. I fear that we face that danger. So those of us who have doubts about the legal validity of subsidiarity working in favour of decentralising should not be subject to abuse.

I have a long record of actively trading throughout Europe. I want trade to flow freely. I want eastern Europe and the Scandinavian countries to enjoy trade throughout Europe. I want the European Community to trade freely with the world, and I do not support protectionist views or policies. I do not want, and have never wanted, Europe to have a federal or unitary state structure, and I know that the Foreign Secretary holds the same view; he has said so many times in my presence, and I do not doubt his word.

I could support subsidiarity if I were persuaded that it was a legally binding vehicle for repatriating powers from the Community back to the nation states. Sadly, it is not. Subsidiarity and the Union are important to Scots, which is why I hope that the Prime Minister will read my comments. I have admired and supported him, particularly in the way he understood and grasped the Scottish nettle of the Union—*[Interruption.]* I refer to the Union of 1707 and, as I have said many times in the Chamber, we Unionist Scots know and understand what it meant by the Union.

Sadly, others—including a previous Conservative Prime Minister—have embraced another, meaningless, description, which goes by the word "devolution." Devolution, like subsidiarity, can be properly assessed only when it is adequately legally defined, as the Scotland Act was. No such legal definition of subsidiarity exists in the treaty of union or in the Bill.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): As my hon. Friend says that subsidiarity and the Union are important to Scots people, may ask him to say which is more important, subsidiarity or the Union? If he is in favour of the Union —because it has brought great benefits to Scotland—why is he not in favour of European union, which might bring great benefits to Britain?

The Chairman: Order. The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) should not be tempted down that path.

Mr. Walker: I hope that the Prime Minister and other Members of the Government will grasp the European nettle just as they grasped the Scottish nettle and admit that union means union of the kind in Europe which we in the United Kingdom created in 1707. It was union that the people of England and Scotland wanted, rather than an unwanted union as contained in the Maastricht treaty. The group of amendments would, if passed, remove article 3b, and thus subsidiarity, from the treaty.

I submit that subsidiarity as originally defined by the Roman Catholic Church is the desirability of devolving power, and the exercise of power, to the lowest level in the hierarchy of the Church. So it assumes initially that all power is vested at the top, for the top to be able to devolve downwards—that the top decides how much, and what, power shall be devolved and that the bottom accepts as much or as little power as the top decides to give it. None of that is subject to democratic control. It is all perfectly proper for the Roman Catholic Church and for the institution that is that Church, and I have no quarrel with that. But as a Presbyterian, I am forever grateful to a gentleman named John Knox.

We are tonight not dealing with a church but with separate nation states and their parliaments which rightly consider themselves to be equal in law with each other and with the Community and in no way subservient to the Commission or the Council. We are not dealing with Jacques Delors as the Pope with all the power, and with Prime Ministers as the bishops who accept what power the Pope gives them. Nor are we the humble laity who accept whatever power is passed down to us.

As the group of amendments would remove article 3b, we must examine what that article says. First, it concerns action taken by the Community under the treaty of Maastricht and earlier treaties, such as regulations and directives. Subsidiarity is not defined in a way that covers interpretations of the actual provisions in the treaty.

Secondly, subsidiarity applies only to areas that do not fall within the Community's exclusive competence. That means that all areas in which the Community has assumed competence are already excluded from the principle of subsidiarity. That interpretation is confirmed by the doctrine of the "occupied field" in the 1988 report of the European Commission versus the United Kingdom.

Thirdly, the Community still acts instead of the member states if, because of the

"scale or effects of the proposed action",

the objectives of that action will be

"better achieved by the Community."

The Community—which means the Commission—will decide.

Subsidiarity might be thought to apply if the matter at issue were solely internal to the United Kingdom, and did not affect any of the other Community countries. Again, that is not so: the justification for Community action lies in the objectives of the proposed action. If those objectives

are listed somewhere in the Maastricht treaty, or in earlier treaties, the Community can pursue a course of action to achieve them, even if it applies to only one member state.

Let us take an example that was discussed earlier. A certain level of social protection is an objective within the treaty, and we have subscribed to that. Under article 3b, the Community—that is, the Commission and the Council—is entitled to take action to impose on the United Kingdom measures that the Commission considers will achieve a high level of social protection in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ray Whitney (Wycombe): My hon. Friend keeps saying "the Community, which means the Commission"; but he has just said "the Community, which means the Commission and the Council". There is a fundamental difference. The decisions that matter are made in the Council of Ministers: I think that my hon. Friend has overlooked that basic principle.

Mr. Walker: I am trying not to say the same thing too often. I apologise for using shorthand when I should probably have gone into more detail. I accept that the Commission will initiate legislation, but all that legislation must be approved by the Council of Ministers.

Under the Single European Act—with which I did not agree—we introduced qualified majority voting. We can be out-voted. If the other 11 states want to go ahead with social protection, we shall be in no position to prevent that from happening, in the United Kingdom or anywhere else.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am sorry to interrupt my hon. Friend again, but I feel that he should point out to his hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) that today, in a Lobby briefing by one of our Ministers, a major change in British law was announced. That change, involving the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1988, will knock privatisation on the head, and could involve massive payments by firms that have been privatised since 1977. It was not secured by the Council of Ministers; it was not achieved by a democratic body. It was brought about simply because the Commission took infraction proceedings—in other words, someone in the Commission wrote a letter——

The Chairman: Order. This does not have much to do with subsidiarity.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The Government have said—it is in today's *Financial Times*—that they hope to use subsidiarity to get out of this mess. I have the cutting here.

The Chairman: Order. In future, will the hon. Gentleman explain what he is referring to at the beginning of his remarks, rather than waiting until the last word?

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend has made his own point very well. I thank him for his useful intervention.

It will be argued that enforcing such restrictions as the 48-hour week on the United Kingdom is within the competence of the Community under article 3b, which puts the whole matter of competition within the single market very much within Community competence. The restriction on working hours—or the lack of it—affects competitiveness. Never mind what the social chapter has to say; I believe that the Commission can act under article 3b.

The same argument applies to the social chapter. No protocol or agreement is needed: the Commission and the Council can impose their will in the whole field of social cohesion, simply by using article 3b. The objectives are already in the treaty, and we have accepted them. This is the same article 3b that, according to Ministers, protects against such Community impositions.

Let us suppose that action were taken by the Commission and the Council against the United Kingdom under article 3b. Let us suppose that the United Kingdom objected to that action, claiming that it contravened the principle of subsidiarity. We could take our dispute to the European Court of Justice, provided that the Commission had claimed in its original proposal that it had considered the principle of subsidiarity, but had decided that it was proper to act, for the various reasons contained in article 3b—had decided, that is, that the "scale or effects" of the action to achieve its objectives justified central action.

In such circumstances, the Court of Justice could not possibly find in our favour. I suggest that the whole interpretation of article 3b is within the competence of the Commission. Provided that the Commission has gone through the motions of considering subsidiarity, there is no provision for the court to substitute its opinion for that of the Commission.

5.15 pm

Let me make an obvious political point. It is in the interests of the Commission, and of individual Commissioners, to exercise as much power as they can. Their very existence depends on their building and maintaining their empire. Similarly, it is in the vested interests of the permanent officials of the Council to fight their individual corners. In the same way, Members of the European Parliament want to build up the prestige and authority of that Parliament. Was it not our own hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie)—who is seeking to stand for the European Parliament—who described it as

"the youngest, biggest super-power in the world"?

She may well be disappointed.

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that my hon. Friend realises that the European Community now accounts for 340 million people, as many as the United States and Japan together. Its gross domestic product is 20 per cent. higher than that of the United States alone. In the remark to which my hon. Friend refers, I was identifying the way in which other countries—especially those on the eastern fringe of the Community—see the Community. I implied no more than that, except that the Community—which means all of us—has certain obligations. Various of my colleagues have referred to those obligations: my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), for instance, referred to them when he was talking about Russia earlier today.

Mr. Walker: I do not doubt the hon. Lady's sincerity. She has a view of Europe, and she believes in sharing it. I defend her right to hold that view; I hope that she will be as considerate about my views.

Most important of all, it is in the interests of the President of the Commission, whoever he or she may be, to corner as much of the decision making as he or she can. None of the Community institutions that I discussed when we were discussing the last group of amendments had any interest in devolving powers back to national Governments or Parliaments; yet those very institutions are charged with interpreting the doctrine of subsidiarity

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in any particular case. As I have shown, they can easily use article 3b to their advantage, deciding that, in any specific case, Community action is preferable.

Did not the summits at Birmingham and Edinburgh shift the balance towards national Governments when they clarified the principle of subsidiarity? That is what I will be asked, but my answer is no. On the contrary, the declaration at Edinburgh reinforced the interpretation that I have given—namely, that the Community and its institutions remain supreme.

The Edinburgh declaration states that the principle of subsidiarity

"does not relate to and cannot call into question the powers conferred on the European Community by the Treaty as interpreted by the Court. It provides a guide as to how those powers are to be exercised at the Community level, including in the application of Article 235. The application of the principle shall respect the general provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, including the 'maintaining ... of the acquis communautaire', and it shall not affect the primacy of Community law nor shall it call into question the principle set out in Article F(3) of the Treaty on European Union, according to which the Union shall provide itself with the means necessary to attain its objectives and carry through its policy".

That surely takes us in exactly the opposite direction to that in which Ministers say it takes us.

I have three questions for members of the Government Front Bench. First, does the principle of subsidiarity mean that we need not apply a 48-hour week? Secondly, under subsidiarity, can we decide our own Sunday trading laws even if the goods traded are made elsewhere in the Community or, on the ground that they are Community goods, and for the sake of competition, can the Commission and the Council dictate the terms? Finally, if the Commission decides that the subject at issue falls within its competence, pursues the objectives of the Treaty and is of a scale or effect touching on more than one country, and if the decision whether all that is true is to be taken by the Commission and not by us, where does that leave the principle of subsidiarity?

If anything, the Edinburgh declaration reinforces the view that the interpretation of subsidiarity will in practice be left to the Commission. As the Edinburgh summit did not amend article 3b at all, as we are now seeking to do, how can Ministers claim that it gave more power to national parliaments? Given that the interpretation of article 3b rests ultimately with the Commission, which has the sole right to initiate Community legislation, does that not give it the power to cover anything that it wants—the social chapter, economic union, education, cohesion, transport or anything else?

Mr. Marlow: A good test of whether subsidiarity will be effective is the important question of the 48-hour week. Will it be possible for European institutions to apply the 48-hour week to the United Kingdom, or will it be a matter for the House to decide? According to my hon. Friend's reading of subsidiarity within the treaty and the Edinburgh declaration, will the House be allowed to make the decision, or is it in the hands of Mr. Delors and the European court?

Mr. Walker: Sadly, I believe that the House will not be able to affect the issue one way or the other. We shall have to accept what majority voting brings, in this and many other respects. Lord Mackenzie-Stuart called subsidiarity "gobbledegook". As a former President of the European Court of Justice, he should know. He said that subsidiarity would render the court's task almost impossible.

The treaty on European union, and article 3b, is all about creating the legal entity of union. At the general election, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister showed that he knew and understood what union meant. On Tuesday, he and the Secretary of State for Scotland declared their support for the union. They recognised that the union and the unitary state were indivisible. They set out to strengthen the Union and did so because they have the statutory powers to do so. I believe that under article 3b and previous Acts, the European institutions will enjoy powers similar to those that the Prime Minister enjoys within the United Kingdom.

The White Paper on Scotland stated:

"To honour that pledge"—

to undertake a detailed consideration of Scotland's constitutional issues—

"the Government embarked on a lengthy and wide-ranging examination of the Union of 1707 and the way it works for Scotland."

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said:

"The Government are deeply conscious of the importance of the Union to Scotland and of Scotland to the Union. We believe that the integrity of the Union is critical if Scotland's prominent role within the United Kingdom and the United Kingdom's key role in the outside world are to be maintained."

I now draw the comparison. The White Paper continues:

"The Act of Union contained 25 Articles providing for the unification of the Kingdoms, the Act of Succession and the creation of one Parliament of Great Britain with a set number of seats for Scottish members."

However, it then states:

"Other Articles"—

I ask you, Mr. Morris, to listen carefully to this—

"provided for a free trade area and economic and fiscal union, and the Treaty as a whole brought Scotland and England together in a full economic and political Union."

Does not that sound very familiar?

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is not that a wholly different union? I cannot understand why my hon. Friend is comparing the two structures and concepts. Is he not reassured by the common provisions in article F(1), which clearly states:

"The Union"—

completely different from the English and Scottish Union—

"shall respect the national identity of its Member States, whose systems of government are founded on the principles of democracy."?

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend is trying to tempt me into an argument. Three hundred years ago, it would have been nonsense to talk about democracy as we know it today. One must study the treaty of Union of 1707 in the circumstances in which it arose. I have read it and I invite my hon. Friend to do the same. I do not want to bore the Committee, so I shall not give details of all 25 articles in the treaty of 1707. *[Interruption.]* Let me make it clear that, north of the border, my comments are considered to be important. If my hon. Friends do not think so, I remind them of the stand taken by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Prime Minister during the general election. They spoke about union, and

made no qualifications. They accepted the 25 articles in the treaty of 1707 and the powers that those articles bestowed on them.

I shall draw the Committee's attention to the similarities between the powers of the treaty of 1707 and those contained in this treaty, especially those in article 3b.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will my hon. Friend be fair to my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow, East (Mr. Dykes) and confirm that the Union with Scotland allowed the Scottish people to keep their own £1 note, in exactly the same way that, as a result of the triumph at Maastricht, we shall be able to keep a separate British £1 note? However, will he make it clear to him that having a Scottish £1 note does not mean that the people of Scotland have control over their economic and monetary policy?

Mr. Walker: Exactly, but I do not want to digress into such matters. I am always delighted to debate the details and technicalities involved in the Act of Union between Scotland and England. I have read that treaty, just as I have read the Maastricht treaty. I understand both where I can or where it is legally possible to understand. When I have asked people for legal advice, most have been unable to tell me what the Maastricht treaty means.

I was referring to the White Paper. In response to a question on Tuesday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland said:

"I am grateful for my hon. Friend's welcome for my announcement. The number of seats in the House derives form the Act of Union, which guaranteed Scotland a certain number of seats. However, I entirely agree that it is high time the boundary commissioners got down to work on the relative size of constituencies."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 796.]

That is important if we bear in mind what is happening to European constituencies, which is why I draw the Committee's attention to it. He also said:

"The Act of Union of 1707——

Mr. Devlin: It is not in the treaty.

Mr. Walker: I know what is in the Act of Union. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) should not get into an argument with me about it. He should go to the Library and get a copy of the amended Act of Union. I suggest that he goes to the Scottish library and gets a copy of the Act of Union, which was passed in Scotland, accepted by this Parliament and subsequently amended. The important issue is the 25 articles in the original Act which were accepted. My hon. Friend has not read them.

The Secretary of State for Scotland also said:

"The Act of Union of 1707 secured for the Scottish people a strong and special place within the United Kingdom. It guaranteed the continuance of Scotland's separate legal, educational and local government systems."—[*Official Report*, 9 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 787.]

5.30 pm

I remind the Committee that article 3b says:

"Any action by the Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of this Treaty."

I submit that the creation of one parliament in 1707 and the articles of that treaty, which provided for a free trade area and economic and fiscal union, combined with full political and economic union, were much the same objectives as those contained in the treaty of union which we are debating today.

My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary said that the Single European Act presented problems with the legal reach of that treaty. During the passage of that Act, I asked about the definition of ever closer union.

Mr. Devlin: Could my hon. Friend explain why he thinks that the Act of Union has been good for Scotland and why a further Act of Union would not be good for Britain?

Mr. Walker: If we put it to the people and they said that they wanted it, I would accept that, because I am a democrat. I have never made my position on that uncertain. The comparisons are odious in that one is being told that we are getting certain things built into a treaty which others, who are better equipped legally to analyse such things, tell me is legal gobbledygook. Surely, I, as a Scottish Member of Parliament, have every right to protect the interests of the Scots, who joined the 1707 Union which was profitable for both parties, because that union is being changed by this union. My hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) shakes his head. He should tell me that when Scotland separates from the rest of the United Kingdom. I am determined to maintain the Union.

I must draw attention to the probable hazards because we must accept that there will be a backlash if we sell a prospectus which does not live up to the sales pitch. On 23 April, 1986, I said:

"My right hon. Friend will be aware that union means something north of the border, and certainly in Northern Ireland; it is something we care deeply about. This afternoon an explanation was given why it was right to call the European Assembly a Parliament. Would it not be correct to assume that, if we continue to use the word 'union' in the way it has been used and is being used, we Scots will be justified in thinking that the word means union as we understand it?"—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 334-335.]

At that time, I was told that I was wrong, but today we know that I was right. I also said:

"The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I have been in my place from the moment that the debate began and that I have not been called to participate in it. He will be aware also that, being a unionist, union means something to me. But if talk about union within Europe is in the same context as union in Scotland, even the hon. Gentleman will understand that that is not quite what we in Scotland believe should happen."—[*Official Report*, 23 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 383.]

I draw attention to that because there is a suggestion in some quarters that one is being disloyal.

I have demonstrated that subsidiarity as contained in the union treaty can and will give powers to European institutions which are not dissimilar to those contained in the 1707 Act of Union. Consequently, it is wrong to claim that the current evidence from the Community is against centralisation or ever closer union. The evidence on air service agreements is testimony to the movement of decision making and negotiations from the United Kingdom Government to European bureaucrats.

We know that, on the past record of the European Court of Justice, it will decide in favour of the treaty's objectives. Community institutions will use the union objective powers as contained in article 3, just as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and former United Kingdom Prime Ministers have used the powers contained in the 1707 Act. The objectives and articles in that Act are not dissimilar to those contained in the European treaty of union.

It is not good enough for my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to say that attitudes have changed. The

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bureaucrats are still in place. New centralising politicians can and probably will emerge. We will not always have my able and talented right hon. Friend to protect our interests, and that aspect worries me.

Subsidiarity, as contained in article 3b and defined at Edinburgh and Birmingham, will not reduce or remove the centralising powers of the treaty of Rome, the Single European Act and the treaty of Union. At best, it is unwise to leave such powers to future politicians. At worst, it is foolhardy to hand over such powers without the full-hearted consent of the people. Next year or 10 years from now, it will be too late and our children and our children's children will not thank us for giving away their power to change the law within the United Kingdom by voting out a Government with whom they are unhappy or changing the incumbent Government's attitude to a specific policy.

Every week in the House, we hear Scottish Members complain about the powers exercised by this Parliament and by the United Kingdom Government in Scotland and Westminster. That is after almost 300 years of political and economic union, of free trade and of economic and fiscal union. Does anyone seriously believe that we will not see, in this age of mass communications, early evidence of disillusionment, especially when it becomes evident that the so-called opt-outs and subsidiarity have little or no impact on the way in which the Community institutions and the European Court of Justice move to implement the objectives contained in titles I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII and in article 3? I shall not read those articles because I am sure that everyone knows them by heart.

I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench why they are reluctant to debate the details of the treaty. Why are they unwilling to admit that the Single European Act, the single market and the treaty of Rome will still be in place even if the treaty fails to be ratified? We will still have a single market. Why are they trying to make out that people such as me and other hon. Members are being disloyal? I remind my right hon. Friends that, on constitutional matters affecting Scotland, I have not changed my position over the past 40 years. My party and my Government have changed on more than one occasion.

I remind my right hon. and hon. Friends that, during the debate in the country in the late 1960s and early 1970s, I asked questions about union and its legal meaning, and I continued to ask such questions in Parliament during the passage of the Single European Act. I remind them that I opposed entry to and membership of the exchange rate mechanism. It was the Government who changed their policy. At what time was I being disloyal? I remind them that, as a Scot, I have constantly striven to get the House to address what the meaning and practice of political, economic and monetary union would be within Europe if it followed the experience of almost 300 years of union within the United Kingdom.

Subsidiarity is legal nonsense. The objectives of the treaty, the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act are legal and binding, just as the articles in the 1707 treaty of Union were legal and binding. If we are to accept such a commitment, the people must be consulted. We must have a referendum. In the absence of a referendum, article 3b should certainly be removed from the treaty. That is why I support amendment No. 29 and the other amendments in this group.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): It is good to see the Foreign Secretary present for the debate. I mean that properly. He feels strongly about subsidiarity. He sees it perhaps as something for which he has worked hard, although, of course, it has been in the treaty for 40 years. I remember that on one occasion he made a speech—he makes good speeches—in which he said that he had no intention of seeing the House of Commons become something like Oxford county council. I mean no disrespect to that body. The Secretary of State may feel that subsidiarity is his contribution to ensuring that the House does not become something like Oxford county council. I fear that he is mistaken.

I do not believe that the concept of subsidiarity will stop the centralising progress and process of the Community. It may arrest it in certain areas, because such things ebb and flow. If one reads about the American constitution, one finds that from time to time the Supreme Court upholds state rights against federal rights. But in general the movement is towards the centre and away from the states.

Indeed, a study of the jurisprudence of the European Court shows that there was a time in the 1950s and 1960s when the judges paid attention to the concepts behind subsidiarity, if not subsidiarity directly. But then, as we moved through the 1970s, and certainly now, the court is moving in the other direction. We shall debate the European Court next. It may take congnisance of the notion of subsidiarity.

The Solicitor-General is here. It is nice of him to come here. I do not criticise him, but he does not have too much work to do on subsidiarity. I agreed with the Commission when it said in its paper to the Edinburgh summit that subsidiarity was essentially a political principle. The European Court does not have much part to play. That is purely a personal view. I would not pretend to be a lawyer with any great knowledge of subsidiarity, but I suggest to the Committee that the only area in which the court might invoke its jurisdiction is a judicial review.

The European Court might examine decisions made by the Commission, but I do not believe that it would tell the Commission that it was wrong and should not have made a certain proposal because subsidiarity applied. It would not do so because that would be to arrogate to itself a political and administrative decision. I know that it is a political court in one sense, but I do not believe that it would go that far.

The European Court might apply the principle of reasonableness—one of the great principles of British law. It might rule that the Commission had arrived at a decision which a reasonable official would reach and had followed the principles of natural justice, so its decision was not wrong. Many lawyers who have given evidence to the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, such as Mr. Jeremy Lever, whom the Solicitor-General knows well, have reached the same conclusion. It is probably the safest conclusion that one can reach.

We are talking about an essentially political principle. It will ebb and flow, as indeed the views of people in Europe ebb and flow about this strange, not federal but European union which is basically a union of institutions. We are talking about institutions coming together and having different competences and powers. The three most

important institutions are the European central bank, the European Commission and the European Court of Justice. I hate to describe them as a troika, or, if that is not correct, a triumvirate. They will continue whatever negotiations take place.

There will be more negotiations and perhaps more treaties. Institutions will fight among themselves to gain more power. The power of the Council of Ministers will decrease a little. The European Parliament will receive a little more power. But the Court, the Commission and the bank will continue and will arrogate to themselves more power.

We shall have a Europe of institutions, as we have now. Attempts will be made at the fringes in the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers to inject some democracy. The Foreign Secretary looks perplexed, but that is the basic danger to democracy of the European state or super-state. People may call it federal, but I do not believe that it is federal or confederal. It is institutional power. That is the real danger we face.

5.45 pm

I wish to ask a few questions about subsidiarity. I obtained from the Library the conclusions of the presidency reached at Edinburgh on 12 December 1992. I read them merely in an effort to understand. Under "Basic Principles" the document says:

"European Union rests on the principle of subsidiarity."

That must be a typing error—it must mean "recognises" the principle of subsidiarity. It continues:

"as is made clear in Articles A and B of title I of the Treaty on European Union."

One has to read those articles right to the end. At the end they say that the treaty also recognises the principle of subsidiarity. I hope that the Foreign Secretary can put my nit-picking Welsh lawyer's brain at rest by telling me that the conclusions of the presidency contained a typing error. European union cannot "rest" on the principle of subsidiarity. It recognises that principle and perhaps seeks to incorporate it, but it does not rest on the principle of subsidiarity.

Then we are told that the principle of subsidiarity

"contributes to the respect for the national identities of Member States and safeguards their powers."

I do not know what the phrase

"contributes to the respect for the national identities"

means. It does not mean anything very much. I shall come back to the question of safeguarding the powers of member states. Subsidiarity may safeguard those powers, but it does so only in the limited areas in which the powers do not rest within the competence of the Commission, the court or the Community and its institutions.

We have heard about article 3b. Indeed, it is mentioned in a footnote to the conclusions of the presidency. We are told in the conclusions:

"Article 3b of the EC treaty covers three main elements."

I am surprised that the Government could write such meaningless nonsense for the conclusions of the presidency at the Edinburgh summit. The document says that the first element is

"a strict limit on Community action."

The use of the word "strict" is odd. The Government try to say that the Community's powers are strictly limited. The powers are limited by the treaty. I suppose that that is a strict limit. The Foreign Secretary nods his head. Why write that at all? Everyone knows that any institution, unless it happens to be the Soviet Communist party, has strict limits. Even the Soviet Communist party was limited by something or other. Every institution in the western world, if it exists within a democracy, is not—*[Interruption.]* If my hon. Friend the Member for Houghton and Washington (Mr. Boyes) wishes to have a discussion of the limitation of the powers of the Soviet Communist party, I am happy to do so.

Mr. Marlow: Is not the problem that the institutions are limited not by a strict limit but by a vague limit? The essence of the treaty is its vagueness, which allows the institutions of the European Community to apply power in whatever area they want.

Mr. Davies: Strict or vague—perhaps a bit of both. The point is that there is a limit and the limit is the treaty. How one interprets it and what it means in a given circumstance is work for lawyers. I am sure that the Solicitor-General agrees about that. It is a splendid treaty for lawyers. Lawyers are doing well out of this European nonsense. Of course there is a strict limit, but why bother to tell us something that is fairly obvious and does not add anything?

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend mentioned competence, but as he knows from article 3b, subsidiarity—whatever it be—applies only outside areas of exclusive competence. When I asked the Attorney-General to list those areas which were within the exclusive competence of the Community so that we could find out where subsidiarity operated, he declined to do so. He said:

"The answer to the hon. Member's question about exclusive competence is the same as to his question about exclusive jurisdiction, mutatis mutandis: the European Community has exclusive competence where that is conferred upon it by treaty provision or measures . . . Current examples include the common agricultural policy, the common commercial policy and the external tariff."—*[Official Report,* 19 May 1992; Vol. 208, c. 67.]

There are many other examples, but he could not define the areas of exclusive competence.

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend is right; there are many other things.

Paragraph 2 of the conclusions of the presidency paper says—I am sorry to bore the Committee—that "the three paragraphs", by which it presumably means those in article 3b,

"cover three distinct legal concepts which have historical antecedents in existing Community Treaties or in the case-law of the Court of Justice."

That is fair enough. The first principle is

"that the Community can only act where given the power to do so".

Again, that is understandable. It then develops quite an interesting argument:

"implying that national powers are the rule and the Community's the exception."

The Commission paper that was considered at the Edinburgh summit advances the same proposition. The original thinking was probably correct: a few powers went up to the Community, but most of the important powers stayed with nation states.

The Maastricht treaty proposes a reversal of that thinking. Now, if one includes stage 3 of economic and monetary union, most of the important powers—certainly those for domestic and economic legislation, but leaving aside foreign affairs and defence—are held at Community level. Once stage 3 is achieved and we have a common currency—as, no doubt, we will—with the powers of the

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European bank, of the European Court of Justice and all the economic powers, national powers will be the exception.

That change has been taking place over the years, and it is crystallised and almost codified in the Maastricht treaty. That is how I see it, but I may be incorrect. That is why we are debating a substantial sea change under the Maastricht treaty.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Does the right hon. Gentleman regard the definitions that he has just read as vaguely strict or strictly vague?

Mr. Davies: I was reading not a definition but the conclusions of the presidency and of the Commission's paper. Perhaps the hon. and learned Gentleman should ask the Foreign Secretary.

The paper continues:

"An agreement shall be sought to this effect"—

that is, the relationship with subsidiarity—

"between the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission, in the framework of the interinstitutional dialogue"—

these institutions talk to each other all the time—

"which is taking place among these Institutions."

I have not followed this closely, so will the Foreign Secretary tell us whether there will be some kind of an agreement? Are we working on it now? Is it ready? What is the agreement supposed to do? The conclusions of the presidency refer to it.

The paper continues:

"The principle of subsidiarity does not relate to and cannot call into question the powers conferred on the European Community by the Treaty as interpreted by the Court."

There is very little left. The Foreign Secretary no doubt put his name to this or negotiated it. It continues:

"It provides a guide as to how those powers are to be exercised at the Community level . . . The application of the principle shall respect the general provisions of the Maastricht Treaty, including the 'maintaining in full of the acquis communautaire', and it shall not affect the primacy of Community law nor shall it call into question the principle set out in Article F(3) of the Treaty on European Union, according to which the Union shall provide itself with the means necessary to attain its objectives and carry through its policies."

That does not mean much.

Rather typically for such a document, it continues:

"Subsidiarity is a dynamic concept".

Perhaps the Foreign Secretary will give some examples of this great dynamism outside acquis communautaire, outside the treaty, outside the court, outside the competence of these institutions, outside the bank. Where will this dynamism come from?

The last paragraph says:

"The principle of subsidiarity cannot be regarded as having direct effect; however, interpretation of this principle, as well as review of compliance with it by the Community institutions are subject to control by the Court of Justice, as far as matters falling within the treaty".

Perhaps the Attorney-General or the Foreign Secretary will tell us what that means. Can an individual who believes that subsidiarity has been breached bring an action in the British courts or European Court of Justice? My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) was a Member of the European Parliament and will know the answer, so I shall give way to him.

Mr. Geoffrey Hoon (Ashfield): An individual can bring an action if he is directly affected by the decision that he is challenging.

Mr. Davies: I am sure that the Foreign Secretary will confirm that my hon. Friend is right. An individual can challenge a decision taken by the Commission in respect of subsidiarity, which is good to know.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is not one of the worrying aspects the fact that European people who are unhappy with decisions made by institutions which, for example, are responsible for the common agricultural policy, are taking direct action, as fishermen have done not in one country but in several?

Mr. Davies: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. I do not know whether I should follow it, but if we have a Europe of institutions with no democratic outlet, people may take such action. Some of the posher British newspapers may be upset about our making fools of ourselves in the House by putting on funny hats, but doing that and trying to assert the rights of the Opposition is preferable to chucking cobblestones. Perhaps it is our way of throwing cobblestones. There is a danger that people will take such direct action, especially when they feel very little allegiance to those institutions.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Is my right hon. Friend convinced that subsidiarity will enable an individual to take his case to the European Court of Justice? No doubt the Foreign Secretary will answer that, but subsidiarity is not new. Commission officials will claim that the committee already acts in accordance with subsidiarity. Are there any precedents of an individual making a challenge under the principle of subsidiarity? An individual might challenge a matter under something completely different, but I have not heard of an individual taking an action to the European Court of Justice under the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Davies: I defer to my hon. Friend, who is a great expert. Unless the Attorney-General says that my hon. Friend is wrong, I am happy to accept what he says.

Mr. Marlow: The right hon. Gentleman referred to the conclusions of the presidency at the European Council in Edinburgh. Subsidiarity is fundamental to the Government's case that things are moving in our direction, that we will have more control over our own affairs and that Europe is now being decentralised. However, as the right hon. Gentleman has just said, the Edinburgh Council concluded that the interpretation of the principle of subsidiarity, as well as the review of compliance, are subject to the control by the European Court of Justice.

What is the possibility that the Government have sufficient influence over the European Court of Justice to ensure that the principle of subsidiarity is applied in the way that the Prime Minister and the Government are suggesting to the country that it is being applied?

Mr. Davies: We must leave that to the court. Whatever may be the mood of the Foreign Secretary, it is clearly the present mood of the European Court of Justice to interpret everything for the benefit of the union. It has always done that. The court threw out the arrangements in relation to the European Free Trade Association and the EC in the

first place. It stated that it should interpret the directives for the benefit of the furtherance of the union, because that is what the court is there to do.

6 pm

Over the past 10 or 15 years, the European Court of Justice has been moving rapidly towards the concentration of the power of the union at the centre and away from the rights of the states—if one can use the example of the United States. That may change, but I would be surprised if it happened.

I believe that the European Court of Justice will not decide questions of subsidiarity. It will simply decide a judicial review procedure. It will say, "Yes, the Commission officials sat down, had a meeting and could reasonably have reached the decision that they did. They followed the procedures that were laid down." As I understand it, there may be a proposal in the intergovernmental and inter-institutional arrangement for rules which the Commission must follow when deciding whether to apply the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): My right hon. Friend has made a good point. If the principle is to be applied politically, we do not know what institutional procedures will be used to determine whether a particular policy or area of activity is to be judged as subject to subsidiarity. Will that be achieved by qualified majority or through the Council of Ministers? If my right hon. Friend could enlighten us about that, it would be very helpful.

Mr. Davies: I cannot really do that. However, I assume that the Commission will take a decision. It may be easier for the Commission to do that than the Council of Ministers. Within its area of exclusive competence, presumably the Commission will have to decide whether it should act or leave it to the principles of subsidiarity. If it takes that decision, so far as I can tell, only the courts can question that. My point is that the courts will be likely to question only on the basis of judicial review.

Mr. Marlow: I think that I can help the right hon. Gentleman. If a matter is to be decided by majority voting, the decision as to whether that is a matter for subsidiarity will also be decided by majority voting. If a matter is put through, and the United Kingdom is in a minority, we can do something about it only by taking the matter to the court. If we take it to court when the matter has been decided on the basis of majority voting and subsidiarity has been decided by majority voting, our chances of making a challenge would be zilch.

Mr. Davies: If the Council of Ministers has exclusive competence over the matter, subsidiarity does not apply. If the Council of Ministers decides by majority voting and it reaches a decision, that is the end of the matter if that matter if within the exclusive competence of the Council of Ministers. As I understand it, the question of subsidiarity arises only if there is a division of responsibility or there is seen to be such a division of responsibility.

Frankly, one could go on for hours referring to the areas that are within the exclusive competence of those institutions. We can identify many of them. However, so far as I am aware, no one has worked it out. If the matter is not within the exclusive competence of the Council of Ministers, presumably a nation state can make a challenge. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield said, even an individual can make a challenge through the courts on the basis that subsidiarity should have applied and the nation state should have been allowed to take a decision on its own.

Mr. Spearing: Even if it is conceded that a nation should be able to act on its own, are not the proponents of this extraordinary doctrine forgetting that article 3b does not say, "If the nation can do it, let the nation do it." Instead, it states whether it should be "sufficiently achieved"—whatever sufficient is—or, if it can be achieved, whether it can

"be better achieved by the Community"

in future. As the whole thing is a proposition, surely it is an hypothesis and, as my right hon. Friend said much earlier, wholly a question of political judgment, which is a matter of opinion and not of legal fact.

Mr. Davies: It is mainly a political matter, although there may be legal consequences.

In paragraph III, headed "Procedures and Practices", of the conclusions of the presidency, we are told under (a), which refers to the Commission:

"The overall monitoring by the Commission of the observance of the provisions of Article 3b in all its activities is essential and measues have been taken by the Commission in this respect."

What happened to that idea? Quite a few people put that idea to the Foreign Office. Sir Jeremy Lever QC produced a paper for the Select Committee on Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. I understand that he wrote to the Foreign Office. He wanted to know why the Commission should be entrusted with monitoring whether the Commission itself was carrying out the guidelines on subsidiarity. In his paper to the Select Committee, Sir Jeremy Lever said that he did not receive an acknowledgement to his letter. Why was it necessary to allow the Commission to carry out the monitoring? There was no need for that.

The monitoring could have been carried out by another organisation. Indeed, we could have had another institution to perform that task. The monitoring could have been carried out by a body comprising Welsh nationalists, councillors or community councillors. We could have had another institution because no doubt by 1996 there will be many more such institutions. A sub-group or perhaps the court of first instance could have carried out the monitoring. If we are really striking a blow for the nation state, why allow the Commission to monitor its own progress?

No doubt those matters have been considered. Perhaps the Foreign Secretary lost the argument. Perhaps he did not put the argument. I cannot get much more out of the presidency paper. Therefore, I will briefly refer to the Commission's paper and to a letter dated 5 November 1992 from Jacques Delors to the Foreign Secretary in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Community. That document is very interesting because the Commission tells us what it thinks of subsidiarity. It states:

"the powers that a State or a federation of States wields in the common interest are only those which individuals, families, companies and local or regional authorities cannot exercise in isolation."

I do not know why the Commission bothered with that first paragraph. It likes to write things like that.

The document continued:

"In the Community context, subsidiarity means"—

[Mr. Davies]

one then gets very excited, as we expect the Commission is about to tell us what it means—

"that the functions handed over to the Community are those which the Member States, at the various levels of decision-making, can no longer discharge satisfactorily."

I did not think that subsidiarity meant that. Member states have handed over functions to the Community and the Community states that they can no longer discharge them satisfactorily. I do not know about that.

Surely subsidiarity does not mean that the functions handed over to the Community are those functions. I thought that it was the other way round. However, we are back to the anomaly. The Commission is still operating under the old jurisprudence, acquis communautaire, and the belief that a few powers are handed up and then everything fits in. That has changed. The Commission has the powers now and it may allow a few to dribble back down through the principle of subsidiarity. That is how I read it.

It then says in paragraph 3:

"For more than 40 years the subsidiarity principle has satisfied two requirements."

So it is nothing new; it has existed for a long time, as has proportionality in the way in which the court interprets the necessary part of the article.

The document goes on to delineate certain policies:

"The common policies"

within the exclusive competence of the Community—

"the creation of a frontier-free area and the flanking policies provided in the Single Act—all these initiatives have been fully justified by the imperatives of European integration. Everyone accepts that these tasks could only be effectively undertaken at European level. The results speak for themselves."

The letter also states:

"national powers are the rule and the Community's the exception."

What a load of nonsense. That appeared in a letter that Jacques Delors sent to the Foreign Secretary. Has the Foreign Office questioned it? Does anybody go through these things? Of course, that is no longer true. National powers are not the rule, and if Maastricht goes through, Community powers will certainly not be the exception. We have to examine how things are evolving and in my opinion that old jurisprudence has gone.

The letter continues in the same vein until paragraph 2 on page 6 where it talks about

"The block of exclusive powers".

That is the block on subsidiarity. It states:

"So that the Community can attain its objectives, certain obligations to act have been imposed upon it"—

poor Commission to have had such terrible powers imposed upon it.

"These include, in particular, the creation of an area without internal frontiers, the strengthening of economic and social cohesion"—

we now return to the point about 48-hour weeks—

"and the establishment of economic and monetary union."

All those powers provide the block of exclusive powers, again outside the competence of subsidiarity. We then have a long list of all the other powers.

In conclusion, perhaps the Foreign Secretary thinks that he has done well and obviously there has been an attempt to nibble away at the extended powers that have given to the Commission, the Community and the bank by the Maastricht treaty. A little will come back for subsidiarity, but it will depend on the political climate at the time, the strength of the Commission and the feeling in member states.

The centralisation process will continue. As those institutions gather more power to themselves and as nation states cannot bring themselves to transfer democratic powers to them, we will have a hybrid of Community institutions with little democracy and people will react and demonstrate against it. They will feel that they have no part to play in it and that is the danger for the people of Europe.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): I apologise to some right hon. and hon. Members, certainly to the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), for not having been here at the beginning of the debate on Monday. I have read what was said, and I shall try to pick up some of the points that were raised.

The principle of subsidiarity, as its critics and supporters have acknowledged, lies at the heart of our idea of the Community. We joined the Germans in negotiations to ensure that there was proper provision for it in the treaty. We put our case, we won the argument, and we are now putting it into effect.

The existence of article 3b, and much else that has been said and done in the past 18 months, illustrates a change in the nature of the debate on Europe. In an opposite sense I am following the point that the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has just made.

The old orthodoxy with which many of us grew up, although we did not all accept it, was that Europe would be built by doing more things together and transferring decision making in a steadily increasing number of areas to Brussels. Every such transfer from national to Community action was hailed as a success and as progress. That principle imbues the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act. There are still priests of that orthodoxy, and from time to time they restate the doctrine to themselves and to others.

6.15 pm

The negotiations for Maastricht, the treaty and what has happened since signify a change in direction. The principle of subsidiarity is now for the first time enshrined in the treaty as a substantial and legally-binding decision.

At Edinburgh we agreed procedures and guiding criteria for ensuring that subsidiarity is applied rigorously across the board of Community activity. That is why I believe that article 3b is one of the significant parts, and I would say gains, of the Maastrich treaty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was absolutely right to say that it is dangerous to oversell an argument, and I do not want to oversell this one, but I believe that the article offers the chance to arrest the centralising, harmonising tide. I do not claim that it marks the end of the debate; the debate will continue and it is crucial that Britain should play a full and central role in it. We will not do ourselves any service if we stand aside from the debate and the decisions that will powerfully affect us.

Mr. Leighton: The Foreign Secretary knows that the great new area of Community competence that the Maastricht treaty provides is economic and monetary

union and a single currency. What subsidiarity is there in monetary policy? As far as I know, there is absolutely none at all.

Mr. Hurd: The treaty provides for a single bank and a single currency. Obviously, we could not have several banks and several currencies. That is one reason why we have an absolute opt-out on that part of the treaty.

Let me deal with one point that was raised by the hon. Member for Hamilton and the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who is not here today.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Yes, I am.

Mr. Hurd: I beg the hon. Gentleman's pardon. He is not in the seat from which he spoke on Monday. I do him an injustice.

The hon. Members for Hamilton and for East Lothian tried to read across the question of subsidiarity to relationships within the United Kingdom. They are entitled to a view on that, but it is not relevant to the debate.

Mr. Home Robertson: It should be.

Mr. Hurd: No. The hon. Member for Hamilton said on Monday:

"we must ensure that national identities and decision making are protected"—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1993; Vol. 220, c. 727]:

That is exactly what is done in the treaty. Article 3b refers only to the relationship between the Community and member states, and the Birmingham declaration states that it is for each member state to decide how its powers should be exercised domestically. Whatever the case for or against devolution in the United Kingdom, it has nothing to do with the treaty of Maastricht, and that is made clear.

Were we having a domestic debate, I would say that transferring powers to parents in schools and to patients in the national health service is a substantially better effort at bringing decision making closer to the citizens than to play about with legislative assemblies in Cardiff and Edinburgh. As we are not having a domestic debate, it would be out of order for me to make that point.

Mr. Marlow: Can my hon. Friend say at this early stage whether the House of Commons will be able to decide whether we should have a 48-hour week in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Hurd: I shall come later to the working time directive and related matters.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): The Secretary of State is making a pedantic point about nation states. The fact that the United Kingdom is made up of nations and not simply regions should not escape him, but is he not aware that the concept of subsidiarity was first used in the European Community in an attempt to resolve the problems in the Federal Republic of Germany between the federal level and the länder state level and it was convenient then to do so. For the British Government alone to say that subsidiarity is confined to a relationship between the nations of the Community and the Community itself puts Britain in a class of one. Everybody else sees the subsidiarity principle as one that takes decision making to the level closest to the citizen. That must have implications for the internal organisation of the states.

Mr. Hurd: No. The hon. Gentleman cannot have understood what I was saying. I quoted from the Birmingham declaration—not from the Government's view but from the Community's view, which is that inside a nation state the arrangements are for that state to decide. The United Kingdom was not alone. Spain, for example, was strongly in favour of the declaration, and it prevailed. As for the treaty, the discussions and the signing of the treaty, the position is clear. It does not affect the pros and cons of devolution and it has nothing to do with the treaty of Maastricht.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): I intervene to fortify, in a sense, what the right hon. Gentleman says. Surely it would be a wholly unacceptable extension of Community competence to allow European union to decide the structures of government within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hurd: Precisely. The right hon. Gentleman, with his usual robust attitude to these matters, has hit the nail correctly on the head.

Mr. Home Robertson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hurd: I am anxious to get on, but as I referred to the hon. Gentleman I shall give way to him.

Mr. Home Robertson: My intervention may be helpful to the right hon. Gentleman. If he is having difficulty in grasping the dangers of failing to acknowledge the status of nations within the United Kingdom, he may care to read an interesting novel called "Scotch on the Rocks", which he wrote himself.

Mr. Hurd: It was a cautionary tale. Various lessons can be drawn from it, but not the one that the hon. Gentleman is suggesting.

My hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) discussed in an interesting speech the levels by which society structures itself. He asserted that the sense of national identity is one of the deepest levels. Indeed, I think he said that it is the deepest level. There is much truth in that, and that truth has reasserted itself in the past year or so. It did so, indeed, in the Maastricht negotiations. That is one of the purposes and points of subsidiarity.

I am not saying that that is a solution to the problem. Again, I do not wish to oversell the argument, but interdependency, as it has developed in the modern world, means that there is some discussion and some tensioning between the different levels that my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne was talking about. By means of the article and the procedures adopted as a political fact before there is a legal obligation, we are trying to ensure that within the Community we shall do our best and be careful to assign actions to the level where they can best be taken.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) made a well-researched speech. I think that he was rather the victim of a doctrine of historic inevitability, rather as the communists used to feel that there was an inevitability about the triumph of communism. My hon. Friend seems to feel that, if we remain in the Community, we are on a sort of conveyor belt that inexorably, whatever is written down and

[Mr. Hurd]

whatever people say or pretend, will sweep us into oblivion as a nation. Many hon. Members feel that. I shall respond to their position before I resume my place.

I do not think that there is such inevitability. Those who hold the defeatist view of inevitability underestimate our influence and the instincts of many people throughout the Community. A draft treaty was submitted to us which reflected that view. There was a time in the negotiations when the Dutch presidency felt that we were straying too far from the traditional orthodoxy. There is the business of the three pillars, two of which do not give the Commission a monopoly of initiative. Two of them are specifically outside the jurisdiction of the European Court.

The Dutch presidency felt that this was unorthodox, and it tabled a draft that re-established the orthodox. If it had been in the treaty, it would have given substance to what my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North was talking about. In fact, it was rejected in September 1991, three months before Maastricht, not because we objected but because the majority of member states saw that it was not on. That is a substantial piece of evidence that change is taking place.

We moved on to the treaty as it stands, with the three pillars that I have described and the principle of subsidiarity. Article 3b does not represent an attempt to prevent all forms of Community action or to repatriate powers that have been given by nation states to the Community. There are many activities that can best be undertaken at a European level.

Let us take the single market, for example. Left to themselves, member states are hardly likely to blow the whistle on illegal aids or other breaches of common rules that give their companies an unfair advantage over the companies of their partners. That is why so much of the pressure for Community action comes from our companies and interests. Britain gains from the existence of strong institutions and can enforce the disciplines of the single market and help to forge common solutions to common problems, such as transnational pollution.

What we need—it is something that we have not had, but we are trying to create it—is a proper mechanism inside the Community to ensure that it, the Community, does only what it should do and can properly do. That is why we argued for an effective definition of subsidiarity. The final wording of article 3b bears the imprint of that effort. As the right hon. Member for Llanelli rightly said, it is a threefold test.

The three paragraphs deal with three separate matters. The first question is whether the Community can act. Does it have a legal base to do so under the treaties? The first paragraph underlines that the Community acts within the limits of its treaty powers and objectives. The right hon. Gentleman says, "Why say that? It is obvious." It is not obvious to many right hon. and hon. Members.

I have so often heard the argument that subsidiarity is merely a gracious delegation by a Community that has grabbed all the powers. It is asserted that it is a delegation outwards and downwards in certain particular instances to national institutions. It is necessary to say that that is not the position. The powers that are available to the Community's institutions are those granted by treaty.

The second question is whether the Community should act. That is taken up by the second paragraph of the article. Can the objective of the proposal be sufficiently achieved by member states? If not, can it be better achieved by the Community?

Thirdly, how much should the Community do? That is a question that covers all Community activity. Is it using the lightest possible form of legislation, leaving as much as possible to the discretion of its member states, consistent with achieving the objective?

I return to the first question, which is whether the Community can act. It is sometimes said that the doctrine of subsidiarity is flawed because the presumption is that the Community should act unless the power to act is delegated to subsidiary bodies. That is the exact reverse of the true position. I shall quote, as others have done, from the Birmingham declaration, which we all agreed:

"The Community can only act where the member states have given it the power to do so in the Treaties. Action at Community level should happen only when proper and necessary: the Maastricht Treaty provides the right framework and objectives for this."

I shall use an anecdote to explain the position. I remember the discussion that took place at Birmingham. One participant was a veteran of Community discussions who had been away for a bit. He had returned after an interval of years. He took the microphone and said, "We cannot say this." He had realised suddenly that orthodoxy had changed and that the old idea that the more the Community did the better was out of date. His view did not prevail; it was considered to be out of date. We went on to agree the words which I have quoted. That illustrates the change that has taken place.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Can my right hon. Friend give us an example of how the provision could be used to protect Britain against a majority vote directive that we believed infringed the principle of subsidiarity? How do we go about it? What do we do? How can we use the provision if we believe that something is being done that infringes the principle?

Mr. Hurd: I am dealing now with the clause itself. In a moment I shall come to what is being done to make this a political fact before it is a legal obligation, which is where my hon. Friend's point will become relevant.

The Edinburgh statement refers to

"the principle that the Community can only act where given the power to do so—implying that national powers are the rule and the Community's the exception".

[Interruption.] The right hon. Gentleman does not believe that, but it is stated and restated. National powers are the rule, and Community powers the exception.

Then it is said that this

"has always been a basic feature of the Community's legal order."

That may be so, but I do not believe that it would have been said two or 10 years ago. This is another sign of the way in which the debate is flowing in the direction for which all parties in the House of Commons, with the exception of one or two individuals, have consistently argued.

6.30 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way, as I believe that I can say something to facilitate the debate.

In respect of one element, we are talking at cross purposes. My right hon. Friend keeps talking about actions that the Community may take, whereas the

principal concern is the extent of legal competence of the Community's institutions. The Council of Ministers might have a political argument about whether particular action should be undertaken centrally or by individual member states. However, my right hon. Friend is not arguing with my basic thesis, which is that the development of the legal competence of the Community is a one-way street.

Competence tends to expand. What we have here is the doctrine of the occupied field. Nothing about subsidiarity begins to reverse the trend. Moreover, the way in which subsidiarity is framed with reference to the objectives of the treaty demonstrates that Community competence will continue to expand and that we shall be able only to make a case that things should be delegated from that legal structure. The legal basis for unilateral action by member states is not strengthened.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is dealing with the question of competence. What is laid down on subsidiarity deals, in the first paragraph, with competence by saying simply that the Community does not have powers that are not yielded to it by treaty. It goes on to say that within the areas where there is mixed competence, where one can argue about whether action should be at Community or at national level, the presumption should be for national action. In real life, that is very important. It is very important in the way in which the Community operates.

I shall come in a moment to the third paragraph about which I think my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North is wrong. The first and last questions—"Can the Community act?" and "How much should the Community do?"—apply to all areas of Community activity. The second question—"Should the Community act?"—applies only to areas of mixed competence, where there is a choice between Community action and national action. Within areas of exclusive competence, where the treaty itself requires a comprehensive body of rules covering a whole field—for example, the common commercial policy—there is no such choice. The question there is how the Community should act—in what way and in how much detail.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North not only asserted that the test introduced in the third paragraph of article 3b—

> "Any action by the Community shall not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaty"—

was flawed but argued that it actually strengthened the centralising tendency of the Community by opening up new fields of possible action. I regard that as a perverse conclusion which indicates misunderstanding of the context of the quoted sentence.

This part of article 3b is concerned not with the scope of Community action but with its intensity, establishing that, where the Community does act, it should use the least constraining instrument available to achieve the common purpose. For example, there is no reason why the Community should use a regulation that is directly applicable in member states when a directive that leaves the method of implementation to member states would suffice. It is precisely this over-regulation of action that causes much ill feeling towards the Community. Too often in the past, over-regulation has been continued in Whitehall.

The Committee will know that one aspect of policy at which we are looking is intended to tackle the habit, which has grown in some quarters, of introducing extra zeal, extra effort and extra complication into this country's implementation of Community rules and legislation. This question of proportionality—choosing the lightest type of action compatible with objectives—is very important.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way, particularly as the Attorney-General is with him.

Is not the nub of the problem the fact that, in this treaty, there is no separation of powers whatsoever and that, therefore, we do not know what subsidiarity applies to, outside the very extensive area of exclusive competence? Even in the case of the mixed area, to which the Foreign Secretary has just referred, we have the words "where the scale or effects of the proposed action can be better achieved by the Community".

But as the action is being proposed by the Council or the Commission collectively, surely it is a matter of pure conjecture whether what is desired could be achieved better collectively at Community level or at national level. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has said, surely that is a matter of political faith or belief.

Mr. Hurd: That is why, in a few minutes' time, I shall come to what is actually happening. At the moment there is not a legal obligation. What is being provided for is political action—a matter to which I shall come as it bears on the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Denzil Davies: The Foreign Secretary is quite right not to oversell article 3b. At the end of the day, there is not all that much to sell. The third paragraph, to which he has just referred, deals with proportionality. That doctrine has been developed by the court over the past 20 years or more. There is nothing new about the third paragraph. It is about proportionality in action.

Mr. Hurd: What is new is that the position is clearly stated in the treaty. Also new are the steps that are being taken to implement. This is the result of the change that is taking place inside the Community. I shall give some examples in a minute.

Mr. Jenkin: My right hon. Friend has quoted copiously from the Edinburgh declaration. He took issue with my assertion that subsidiarity could be used to expand the legal competence of the Community. The Edinburgh declaration says:

> "Subsidiarity is a dynamic concept and should be applied in the light of the objectives set out in the treaty."

It allows Community action to be expanded where circumstances permit.

Mr. Hurd: Let my hon. Friend continue to quote.

Mr. Jenkin: The declaration goes on to say that there may be delegation downwards, but that does not alter legal competence, which means that the Community, once it has the legal competence, cannot give it up.

Mr. Hurd: If my hon. Friend quotes, he ought to quote in full. The balance of the whole sentence, the second part of which he has indirectly quoted sotto voce, completely alters the thrust of his argument.

The three questions that are raised and dealt with in article 3b are the article's essence. This is a legally binding provision requiring that whichever of the questions apply should be answered satisfactorily for all proposals for Community action. It is binding in the first instance upon

[Mr. Hurd]

the EC institutions engaged in the legislative process—the Commission as it proposes; the European Parliament as it is consulted and suggests amendments; and the Council as it decides.

As with other provisions of the treaty, the ultimate arbiter in case of dispute about whether the principle has been complied with will be the European Court of Justice. The hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon) was perfectly correct in answering a question from the right hon. Member for Llanelli about the ability of an individual to have recourse to the court if he feels that he is directly concerned by the decision in question.

Much has been made of the apparent difficulties that the court may encounter in interpreting this provision. In this debate, lawyers have been quoted. I should like to refer hon. Members to the answer given by the Lord Chancellor in another place on 8 July last year. The noble and learned Lord said that he believed that the principle was

"perfectly enforceable by the European Court of Justice, as it enforces other principles of general application."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 8 July 1992; Vol. 538, c. 1140.]

The court takes notice of the purposive character of Community provisions. Once the treaty has been ratified, article 3b will be in it. It will be a powerful expression of the purpose and intentions of the treaty—to reduce the scale and intensity of legislation.

In the past, all the signposts put up by member states have encouraged the court down the path of centralisation. Article 3b is different; it points the Community and the court in a different direction. Member states have made a conscious shift of direction and the court cannot, and I am sure will not, ignore that.

Those who say that the court simply implements the treaty have to accept that once the treaty is ratified—not now, when we deal only with the treaty of Rome and the Single European Act, but when the treaty of Maastricht is ratified—the court will have a signpost in a different direction. That is the crucial point for those who have difficulties about the court.

I do not believe that it is the court that will be crucial. The court is there and it will be the legal underpinning for subsidiarity. But, if it were constantly invoked, as the right hon. Member for Llanelli, I think, said, the principle would not be working properly. It is a fallback, an underpinning.

What we have to do, and have begun to do even before the treaty is ratified, is to make this principle a working fact in the life of the Community. If the institutions at which the principle is primarily aimed abide by it, there will not be cause to challenge any Community action as having violated it. That is why we have begun to establish the procedures.

New procedures were agreed at Edinburgh by the Council to ensure that the subsidiarity aspects of every proposal are fully examined. Any member state will be able, for example, to insist that a proposal which raises issues of subsidiarity should be put on a later Council agenda for a specific debate including those aspects. All new Commission proposals will include justification on grounds of subsidiarity, and that has already begun to happen in practice. So these procedures will provide the focus for a debate in the Council as to whether Community action is really necessary before there is a debate on what form it should take.

The next question is, what are the tests; what form does this kind of discussion take? The European Council has agreed a set of rigorous criteria to guide the Council in making these decisions. I do not agree with the right hon. Member for Llanelli that the result of Maastricht is to strengthen the institutions that he mentioned—the bank, the court and the Commission. The body that will be most strengthened by Maastricht is the European Council, because it is the apex, the architrave, of the three pillars. The foreign affairs pillar and the home affairs pillar have nothing to do with the Community, or the monopoly of the Commission, or the court. This is a side issue, but the right hon. Gentleman raised it, and I believe that it is the European Council, representing the Heads of State or Government, that will be the chief gainer from Maastricht.

I come back to the criteria to guide the Council in making these decisions. When there is a choice between Community and national action, the judgment will be made against such criteria as whether there is a significant cross-order effect; can the objective proposed be sufficiently met by national action alone; are there economies of scale involved; would the absence of Community action damage member states' interests, for example, by distorting the level playing field and giving competitive advantage?

Mr. Denzil Davies: The right hon. Gentleman has said that the Council of Ministers would consider whether there was national or Community competence. Who decides that first question? Is it the advisers of the Council who will decide whether there is exclusive competence, because, if there is exclusive competence, subsidiarity does not apply? Who decides whether there is mixed competence—the court?

Mr. Hurd: In the end it is, of course, the court. But the right hon. Gentleman is wrong in saying that subsidiarity does not apply. The proportionality part of article 3b, the third paragraph, applies right across the field. That is why we specifically had the third sentence of article 3b as a separate paragraph and not as part of the second paragraph. That was a deliberate part of our negotiating stance.

Mr. Shore: The right hon. Gentleman is putting forward a very reasonable and reasoned argument, but I put to him a question which he rather dodged and which was put to him a bit earlier. Does not the whole balance of the argument about the tendency to centralise, as opposed to what he would like to see—the tendency to decentralise—crucially rest upon whether there is to be a central European bank and economic and monetary union? His only defence against that so far has been to say that there is an opt-out protocol, but does he not agree, in his judgment of the balance of the treaty, that, if we do not exercise that opt-out protocol, it is clearly a centralising measure?

6.45 pm

Mr. Hurd: Certainly, if there are not several banks and several currencies, it is a centralising measure; I do not think that that can be refuted. But, as I say, that would be

relevant to the House of Commons if and when there was a proposition before it that we should adhere to and adopt a single bank and a single currency.

Even when it is accepted on these and other criteria that the Community should act, it is also agreed—this is following the proportionality point—that the Community should not do any more than is required to address the problem. that is the last paragraph of article 3b. Here again, criteria were agreed, including, for example, that measures proposed should minimise financial and administrative burdens on member states and leave as much scope as possible for national action, and that there should be a preference for setting a minimum standard rather than for harmonising across the Community.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): On proportionality, is it possible that the interpretation of the amount of proportionality that should apply should in some cases be nil, so that it would not be a case that should be dealt with by the Commission, but one that should be left to the nation states? Is that a legal possibility?

Mr. Hurd: It is a legal possibility, of course. There are areas, such as agriculture, which are exclusive competence, but there are all kinds of agricultural matters which are dealt with by nation states, and I think always will be, under the doctrine of proportionality.

There has been a lot of questioning on the commitment of the Commission to this principle. I believe that, no doubt reaching the conclusion by its own intellectual route, it now take this principle very seriously indeed. Early in 1992, the Commission's annual work programme said:

"If a success is to be made of Maastricht and the Single Market, the Commission will have to comply fully with the principle of subsidiarity. Indeed, its future existence depends on this. Beginning in 1992 the Commission, working with the other institutions, will have to establish how subsidiarity is to operate and devise procedures to ensure that no attempt is made to regulate matters that are best dealt with at national level and to avoid a surfeit of legislation."

Those are not just words; this has happened to the extent that, whereas in 1990 there were 162 legislative proposals from the Commission and in 1991 there were 145, in 1992 118 were planned, but only 50 actually came forward. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Milligan) has already made this point. This shows that there has been a very sharp falling off of the volume of legislation coming out of the Commission for consideration by the Council.

Mr. Marlow: Is it just possible that less legislation came out of the Commission last year because it is waiting for ratification, and that once ratification takes place there will be a rush of directives, regulations and other issues by the Commission?

Will my right hon. Friend address himself to the point in the guidelines that subsidiarity is said not to apply if any member state takes action which conflicts with the principle of cohesion? Is that not a fairly powerful area? Does it not mean that a lot of things that we might wish to do in the United Kingdom could be taken as interfering with social cohesion in the Community and therefore as matters not for subsidiarity but for regulation and legislation at the European level?

Will my right hon. Friend come back to the point which I made earlier about the 48-hour week? Under the principle of subsidiarity, is that a decision that we would be able to make in this country, in the House of Commons,

Mr. Hurd: It may well become a matter for the European Court to decide whether the working time directive is ultra vires. It has nothing to do with the treaty of Maastricht. I will come back to that point in a moment, because I believe that it underlines a weakness in my hon. Friend's position.

The hon. Member for Hamilton said that we must try to work out a flexible method by which subsidiarity can be taken out of the statute books and made to work in political practice. Exactly.

That is why the Commission was asked to produce, by the end of this year, a full review both of pending proposals and of existing legislation, with suggestions for amendment or even repeal on grounds of subsidiarity. At Edinburgh, it produced the first fruits of the exercise. For example, it accepted that environmental legislation needs to be simplified and updated, in particular, directives on air and water.

On agriculture, the Commission will give more responsibility to national authorities for applying Community legislation. A proposal for the regulation of zoos will be scrapped. The bathing water directive will be revised, and many similar irritating, bureaucratic directives on food will go. That is relevant to the news that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) reported from the European Parliament today.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my right hon. Friend please address the point that I made about air service agreements?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend made a cogent and prolonged argument on that point. I shall come back to him on it rather than answer off the cuff.

The Commission, in action and in words, has shown that it is conscious of the need to legislate by setting minimum requirements rather than resorting to heavy-handed harmonisation across the board.

That is only the beginning. It is not enough for the Commission to act in that way, although it has to do so. Member states should also come forward with their own idea of where proposals and existing legislation might fail the subsidiarity test, and during our presidency we encouraged them to do so. We are doing that.

The proposal for European works councils, for example, seeks to impose a uniform system for informing and consulting workers. The British ask why that is better accomplished at a European level rather than being left for member states to adapt their procedures to national and local conditions.

Measures relating to speed limits and alcohol levels in drivers' blood are two other ideas which we believe and which we are pressing should be abandoned forthwith on subsidiarity grounds. We shall maintain pressure on those and other proposals in the months ahead.

This is not a paper or a theoretical exercise. The Community—no doubt not with the speed that we would wish—is turning that principle into a political operating fact even before it is a legal obligation.

Mr. Michael Lord (Suffolk, Central): I am sorry to have to take my right hon. Friend back briefly to a point that was made a few moments ago. I think that he conceded

[Mr. Michael Lord]

that the idea of a single currency and a central bank made the treaty a centralising treaty for those people who sign up for that. Does that therefore mean that this is a centralising treaty for 11 nations but not for us?

Mr. Hurd: I was asked about that aspect of the treaty, not all the other aspects on which the Committee has spent so much time.

I was asked about the proposal for a single bank and a single currency. Obviously, by definition, if one has a single bank and a single currency, one does not have several banks and several currencies and therefore one does not have several monetary centres.

The Community has to decide whether to do that. We in the House of Commons will, or may eventually, have to decide whether we want to do that. That decision will be taken by the House. It does not affect the general movement in the Community which I have illustrated and, I hope, documented—not just what is proposed in article 3b but what is happening on the ground in the institutions of the Community.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): My right hon. Friend referred to the speed with which subsidiarity is being applied and to a proposal on the conditions in which animals are kept in zoos, but even that has not yet been agreed. Can he confirm that the only three directives that have been withdrawn are one on the compulsory indication of nutritional values on packaged foods and two on radio frequencies? With due respect, that is not exactly the white-hot heat of politics. Some of us fear that it must be left to national Parliaments to decide what powers they wish to give away, not vice versa.

Mr. Hurd: It is for national Parliaments and Governments to decide what powers they yield to the Community. My hon. Friend is right. He is also right to be impatient at the pace of change. As I have said, we are constantly pressing for that to be accelerated. What we had at Edinburgh was the first fruits, but the first fruits before the treaty was ratified, before the Commission was under any legal obligation. It has begun to act.

I agree that the speed with which the Commission is acting is too slow, but my hon. Friend has shown, even in his small examples, that those are movements in the right direction, not movements in the direction which is constantly prophesied and feared in the House of Commons. All right, it is a slow movement, it is only the beginning, it is only the first roots, but it is happening. It is not a myth, and it should be the instinct and interest of the House to encourage and develop it.

Mr. Marlow: The point of the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) is that the power to decide on the speed of the move towards subsidiarity is in the hands, not of the House of Commons, but of the European institutions. At the moment, we are waiting on potential ratification. Does my right hon. Friend really think that, once that is out of the way, the European institutions will surrender their powers back to this House?

Mr. Hurd: They are going to. The powers are those that have been granted previously or now by national Governments. How they are used is what subsidiarity is principally about. I have illustrated the change that is happening, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) documented. It is in our interests to move that forward.

I pause for a moment on the attitude of those who criticise the clause, the Bill, the treaty. There are some in all parts of the Committee who have, throughout, opposed our membership of the Community and would like us to withdraw now. I see them around me in different places. That would be disastrous, whether for Britain's prosperity or for its place in the world, but at least that is a logical and understandable position, which has been sustained by some right hon. and hon. Members for many years.

What to me is far less understandable and lacks logic is the stance of those who are in favour of our membership of the Community but against the clause, against the Bill and against the treaty. Where would they end us up? We would have torn up a treaty which, with the approval of the House, the Government had signed. We would thus, I promise the House, have robbed ourselves for a number of years of any effective influence in the future of the Community to which we would continue to belong.

We would be left with a treaty of Rome and the commitment to the ever closer union of peoples. We would be left with a whole system of Community law, which my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North and many others have criticised. We would be left with the monopoly of initiative of the Commission in all areas of Community competence. We would be left with the jurisdiction of the European Court. We would be left with the argument about the working-time directive. That would not be altered in any way. We would be left with article 235 and the possibility of the extension of competence. All that would remain if we remained in the Community but rejected the treaty.

We would have lost the possibilities of subsidiarity, which I hope that I have documented, we would have lost the exclusions in article L of the role of the European Court from the areas of the pillars for foreign and security policy and home affairs matters. We would have lost for the foreseeable future any possibility of enlarging the Community. We would be left with all the things which so many of my right hon. and hon. Friends and Opposition Members most dislike and most criticise.

We would be left with those aspects of Community life on which hon. Members base their criticism of the treaty, although they are the result of existing treaties and obligations. We would have lost our influence in Europe and the hopeful aspects of the Maastricht treaty and, in particular, of article 3b. I cannot imagine a more feeble and foolish posture.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we would also be left with free access to the single European market?

Mr. Hurd: Yes, of course—policed by the Commission with all the difficulties and all the arguments about regulations and directives. We would be left with the single market and all the associated structure of Community law. My right hon. and hon. Friends have sat through many of these debates and they will know that so much of the criticism is based on the existing structure. That is what has turned many people—understandably—against the Community and its works, but that is not an argument for refusing to ratify the treaty.

It is an argument for moving forward. That is what the House of Commons and this country ought to do. The debate is not over. I am not claiming that it is over in Europe, in our favour. There are different views in Europe about the future development of the Community. That is inevitable.

7 pm

The member states are a heterogeneous bunch, seeking to protect different interests. There has long been a view of the Community as a system of centralised institutions, with responsibility for all fields of policy. That view has now been checked. It is checked by the structure of the treaty, by the pillars and by this article. I am convinced that we should now, whether we are talking as a party, as a Government, as a House of Commons, or as a country, ratify the treaty and move on, working out for ourselves our own ideas as a country which we should put to the next conference, to the next set of discussions with, I hope, an enlarged Community, ideas that we put forward positively, and not simply react to those of other people. They would be ideas based on what most people in this House want—an open, expanding, free-trading, decentralising Community.

That can be built only on the basis of this treaty and on the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Barnes: The Secretary of State made an interesting distinction between the three paragraphs in article 3b. He described the first as setting out action that could be taken on a legal base. Could action be taken? Secondly, should it be taken? Thirdly, in the paragraph on proportionality, how much action should be taken?

In an intervention, I asked the Secretary of State whether it would be possible for no action to be taken on proportionality at all, even though the Community could act according to the provision in the first paragraph. If that is the case, the second paragraph which contains the term "subsidiarity" is unnecessary, because the nil proportion is something that could apply from the third paragraph.

I ask hon. Members to look at amendment No. 340, which does not seek the deletion of the—*[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but there are far too many private conversations going on. If people wish to engage in those, they should leave the Chamber.

Mr. Barnes: I do not seek to delete the entire article, but only the second paragraph, which applies to subsidiarity. From the position that was put forward by the Secretary of State, logically the second paragraph is unnecessary and counter-productive. It is important that we should have an understanding, which we do not have from this debate, of what subsidiarity is, its full definition and how it is to apply.

I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, which has now received a letter from the Leader of the House stating that in future all measures coming before us on regulations and directives will contain a paragraph on subsidiarity. The Government will be putting it to us whether measures meet or do not meet the provisions on subsidiarity. On that Committee, we need to be in the position to judge whether the paragraphs being put forward meet the criteria which, it is argued, are now being adopted by the Commission and other areas of the Community institutions.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does the hon. Gentleman, who sits with me on the European Legislation Committee, recall that we already have these paragraphs in the reports presented to us, but that they say nothing, other than the assertion that, in the opinion of those who have prepared them—Ministers—in that particular instance the situation falls within the subsidiarity rule? It is a meaningless exercise and does not get us anywhere.

Mr. Barnes: I agree that it is a meaningless exercise. All it is at most, even though it is more detailed, is a retionalisation of a decision already determined by the Commission and in the Government's response to Commission proposals.

We can continue to have this check list thrown about all over the place, but all it will do is reinforce decisions that would have been made in any case. It seems that we should have been having the subsidiarity provisions throughout the time the Select Committee has been operating, because what is said in the letter that was read out by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Denzil Davies) is that, for 40 years, the principle of subsidiarity is one on which the Community is supposed to have been acting.

This debate follows a debate that we had on the institutions. The two are related. I argued in the debate on the institutions that the institutions of the Community which were developed, especially from Maastricht, were undemocratic, centralised and highly bureaucratic and were leading us down the road to a unitary state or a state of the institutions.

It is often argued now on subsidiarity that there might be something in that when related to the institutions, but that it is all okay because there is the sacred principle of subsidiarity which now begins to correct all that and means that the tendencies contained within the institutions can somehow be overcome by applying this notion. It will restore democracy; it operates forms of decentralisation; it tackles over-bureaucracy; and begins to return areas of sovereignty to nations.

If it is a concept like that, it is highly important and significant. If it were to be so, it would have to be a constitutional and legal notion and not merely a social and philosophical set of ideas with some possibility that it might operate in the future. We should have to tie things down in that area. That would run contrary to the arrangements contained within the institutions with terms in legal and constitutional provisions that take us in the opposite direction.

We are faced with a notion which is nonsense and meaningless; it sounds as though it is saying something, but it is intended to mean different things to different people. There is no way in which the terms contained in it can be effectively checked in any area.

There is a principle in philosophy called verification, by which one seeks to verify what has been said in different areas. How can one verify the correctness of subsidiarity and whether it is applied in a particular area? Anyone can agree or disagree that it is applied. It is merely the wildest form of value judgment to say that it is operating.

Mr. Spearing: Is not that wholly borne out by the words of the article? While in a court of law one verifies what has happened or what is, the essence of subsidiarity, as defined

[Mr. Spearing]

or attempted to be defined, is that one is trying to look into the future and come to some conclusion about which way the dice will fall. That is almost impossible in the modern world.

Mr. Barnes: That is an extra aspect to the points I am making—what is being applied to developments and progress in the future. It is not merely a judgment of what a set situation is, which is what people would normally be trying to apply when they were operating laws.

It would be nonsense to have a measure before us containing the concept of subsidiarity. Many Scottish and Welsh Members have argued strongly to have the principle of subsidiarity applied in the United Kingdom. If that notion is meaningless for the whole of Europe, including this nation and its links, it is nonsense to operate within this system. We would find ourselves in the most difficult arrangements if we had in front of us a measure affecting Scotland, for instance, which included this term. It is a value-laden notion that we would not normally be concerned with in constitutional and legal matters.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The hon. Gentleman seems to be treading on thin ice. The House constantly trades in exactly the kind of concept which he is vilifying because it is difficult to verify. The word "devolution" is but one example of such a concept. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary pointed out how this arguable concept might apply in practice. That made it much more tangible than the hon. Gentleman is arguing it to be.

Mr. Barnes: I agree that we deal with matters in which value judgments come to the fore. In legislation we often have the word "reasonable", and there is much argument about whether the word should be included, or whether we should be more precise. In regard to devolution, if there is not a clear definition problems would emerge in various areas. Things change according to changes of degree. If a term is so shot through with value considerations that it cannot be cashed in, we are in serious difficulty in dealing with legislation. Of course, we can put anything we want, however nonsensical, in a Bill, but we may find ourselves in considerable difficulty in carrying out the law.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. Gentleman take it from me that devolution means all things to all people, particularly in Scotland, where there are so many ideas, including the declaration of Perth to which I listened a long time ago? It is all a question of who is talking about it, when, what they are talking about, and what it means to them.

Mr. Barnes: Legislation would have to spell out exactly how devolution was to apply. In regard to Northern Ireland, we would have to establish in the legislation whether there was to be a parliament in Northern Ireland and whether a Bill of Rights was to be associated with it.

Recently I introduced the Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill. I went through it word by word to see whether it included anything of a value nature which was anywhere near the concept of subsidiarity. Nothing begins to approach it. There is a reference to access for disabled people and various audits being done, as well as terms which begin to nudge near value judgment considerations, but there is nothing as sweeping as the provision with which we are dealing, which involves all the nations in the European Community. We should not have to deal with nonsensical provisions. That is why I want to delete the term.

Never have so many hopes been based upon such a flimsy and inadequate concept. Maastricht tells us that subsidiarity means that the Community is only allowed to act when member states cannot officially achieve a Community objective and that this is better achieved by the Community itself, provided that the European treaties do not already give the Community exclusive competence in the areas concerned. The exclusive competence area expands and grows all the time. There is exclusive competence in regard to the common agricultural policy. Last night we voted on a measure which added the potato regime to the CAP. So competence in that area has been extended very recently.

7.15 pm

Who is to judge when conditions of subsidiarity apply? None other than the self-same institutions to which I have referred and which were discussed in earlier debates—the Commission, the Council of Ministers and perhaps, if it can find a way in by consultative processes, the European Parliament, which is mentioned very little in any of these discussions. There is a great democratic deficit in Europe which should be before us all the time.

In cases of dispute, the European Court might be called in to make a judgment, but its judgments will be purely arbitrary because it will have merely the undefined principle of subsidiarity before it. We have the agreement made by the heads of state at Edinburgh and the document which has been quoted from at length in our debates. But those are not part of the Maastricht treaty. Nor does the treaty contain provisions acceptable in international law which would have some feedback into arrangements under the treaty.

Nobody has suggested the use of mechanisms to ensure that those provisions are added to the treaty. In the end we have little legal guidance about how this vague, obscure motion is to be dealt with, yet, when judges make decisions, those decisions will be constitutional and should be made under the provisions of the treaty. They will be of such significance that they should be acted upon only if adopted by referendums in all the member states.

The recent European Council meeting of Heads of State at Edinburgh attempted to elaborate on subsidiarity. Far from deciding to devolve powers to national or regional levels throughout Europe, they stressed the centralising nature of subsidiarity. The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) quoted at length from the document that was agreed at Edinburgh. We should be fully aware of its contents.

The centralising aspects of the provisions in the document are considerable. It states that it

"cannot call into question powers conferred on the EC by the Treaty",

as several hon. Members have mentioned. It says that it shall

"not affect the primacy of Community law nor call into question . . . (that) the union shall provide itself with the means necessary to attain its objectives and carry through its policies".

It continues:

"it allows Community action to be expanded where circumstances require".

Someone will have to judge what the circumstances are which will allow the area to be expanded. It also says:

"the more specific the nature of a treaty requirement, the less scope exists for applying subsidiarity".

Let us consider the documents in front of us. There are many areas in which there are specific requirements. Yet subsidiarity cannot apply to any of those areas. In the end subsidiarity is to be no more than an item on a checklist. It is like the plaque which some people have on their walls saying that everything is well in the home. It is compatible with what is happening in the home, where everything is peaceful, and we expect it to influence behaviour. There are similarities with the principle of goodness. We are all in favour of goodness, but its definition occupies some people for considerable periods of their lives. Subsidiarity is a moral and philosophical notion that has been given no legal or constitutional application in the Maastricht treaty. It means whatever the institutions of the Community wish it to mean.

We must contrast that with the concept of federalism. A form of federalism that was democratic would define the different areas in which the federal and nation states would be involved. We are bound to wonder whether we are being offered federalism by the notion of subsidiarity. In other words, are we engaged in a development towards federalism? Is it a subterfuge or con trick designed to move us towards federalism? I would like to see the establishment of a democratic federal Europe with, among other things, a social agenda, but I do not want a half-federal arrangement creeping in without the necessary democratic institutions.

Constitutional documents must contain terms that are clear, precise, open and democratic. After all, a number of alternatives could be adopted in developing collective arrangements. Nations could come together in voluntary co-operation under general treaties from which departures could be made at later stages, nations could move into a unitary system in which they surrendered their sovereignty entirely, or nations could move into a federal or confederal arrangement.

The only other possibility would be a mixture of those alternatives. Is it suggested that the European Community will be such a mixture, with some areas of exclusive competence representing unitary provisions, with areas outside involving nation states. In that event, would, say, local government taxation issues be for national parliaments, with other large areas between being covered by mixed competence? We should be told just what are the different areas and what applies to them. We need clear terms defining the principle of federalism which would allow those areas to be divided.

The Secretary of State said that we were being presented with something entirely new from the point of view of the European Community. Apparently, the traditional concepts of unitary states, federal arrangements and voluntary agreements between nations do not apply because something totally new is being constructed. If so, the details should be spelled out precisely and related to what might be called the old notions, so that we may understand exactly what is being proposed.

I doubt whether, even though the issue may be examined in general, political, constitutional or democratic terms, there is anything new under the sun. It might be possible, as I say, to arrive at a combination of arrangements. If that is being proposed, the details must be spelled out. We must be sure that any provision containing anything as constitutionally obnoxious as the notion of subsidiarity is defeated.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, put and agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the amendment be made:

The Committee divided: Ayes 34, Noes 289.

Division No. 193] **[7.24 pm**

AYES

Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Bennett, Andrew F.
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Cann, Jamie
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cummings, John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Hanson, David
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Leighton, Ron
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Parry, Robert
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Harry Barnes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*

Freeman, Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lhwyd, Elfyn
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wigley, Dafydd
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Nicholas Baker.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. John Morris (Aberavon): I beg to move amendment No. 32, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 171 on page 46 of Cm. 1934 relating to the European Court of Justice.)'.

The Second Deputy Chairman: With this, it will be convenient also to discuss the following amendments: No. 228, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert 'except Article 172'.

No. 329, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 168a on page 46 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 330, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 171 on page 46 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 331, in page 1, line 9, after 'II', insert

'(except Article 172 on page 46 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 411, in page 1, line 9, after 'III', insert

'(except Articles 32, 32(d) and 33 on pages 64 and 65 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 416, in page 1, line 9, after 'IV', insert

'(except Articles 137, 140a, 143 and 146 on pages 73 and 74 of Cm. 1934)'.

No. 152, in page 1, line 10, after '1992', insert

'but not Article 143 in Title IV thereof'.

Mr. Morris *rose—[Interruption.]*

The Second Deputy Chairman: Order. Will hon. Members who are leaving the Chamber please leave quickly and quietly? The noise that they are making is very discourteous to the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris), who has the floor.

Mr. Morris: Amendment No. 32 is a probing amendment, but a number of questions arise from it. I know that many hon. Members on both sides of the Committee are concerned about the powers of the European Court, and about the way in which it exercises those powers. We must give careful consideration to any transfer of power from elected representatives to the judiciary in Europe, which is not elected. We must also give careful consideration to any increase in power, including the power to impose penalties.

The test is this: is such action necessary, and is the present system deficient? Does the proposed remedy meet any deficiency in the system? Are there any disadvantages? The European Court makes important decisions; when additional powers are sought for it, we must examine them carefully—given, that is, that my basis premise is valid—and decide whether Europe, and the United Kingdom as part of Europe, will be better off at the end of the day.

Perhaps the Minister can tell us something of the philosophy of the European Court. Is it an interpretative court, maintaining the status quo and defining situations as they arise? Or does its track record suggest that it is an innovative court? Will it lead to centralisation?

I listened with interest to the last few minutes of the debate on subsidiarity. In due course, the European Court may have to interpret that difficult concept; that, too, will be interesting. Eminent lawyers have given very different views. If the matter became the cause of litigation, I fear that we should have to wait for an interpretation of that important concept, which is of interest to us all. Only a few moments ago, the Foreign Secretary said that the signposts are now pointing in a different direction. If he is right, it would be interesting to anticipate or perhaps hear the Minister of State's views about how the court might interpret those signposts.

When the court began its operations, and with the coming of the Single European Act, there was concern about whether it would operate on the basis of judicial restraint, or whether its aim would be further to strengthen the Community legal order. Early in 1991, the learned editors of the *Common Market Law Review* said:

"Some time ago the thought was widespread that the coming into force of the Single European Act would more or less coincide with the onset of a period of judicial restraint on the part of the Court of Justice. It was thought unlikely that the Court could continue to hand down judgments of major institutional importance. Would the Court not be overstepping the limits of its authority if it were to take decisions which were liable to further strengthen the Community legal order, e.g. by specifying the effects which Community provisions must have within the national legal order and by identifying the type of judicial remedies and procedures which the national legal order must make available to private individuals in order to secure 'the useful effect of the direct effect' of the Community provisions?"

Since 1991, and the coming of the Single European Act, I wonder whether that prophecy has been fulfilled. Is there judicial restraint, or is the court an innovative court? Perhaps the Minister of State might tell us something about the philosophy of the court so that we can judge the proposal to give it additional powers.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Morris. In the light of what the shadow Attorney-General has been saying, am I right in thinking that we should have a response not from the Minister of State but from the Attorney-General? It seems incongruous for a Minister to give opinions on a matter such as the Court of Justice, which is of great legal importance, in which he has absolutely no competence.

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I am looking forward to the day when I can deal with a genuine point of order. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Morris: The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) follows these matters very closely. We have the benefit of the presence of the Attorney-General as well as having the wise words of the Minister of State. We were all encouraged by his remarks on 20 January and further encouraged by the Attorney-General's remarks some weeks later. If we add the two lots of encouragement together, and take into account the fact that they are both present in the same place and sitting on one and the same Bench, I am confident that the hon. Gentleman will not be disappointed. We may have one contribution from the Minister and another from the Attorney-General, although I cannot guarantee that they will be of the same order or along the same lines. There is plenty of time.

Mr. Cash: In the light of the experience that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has just described, does he agree that it is rather like the case of Tweedledum and Tweedledee in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" and "Through the Looking-Glass"?

Mr. Morris: I have been a Member of this House for a while and I should not want to be so offensive as to describe two distinguished Members, who approach matters from a different legal standpoint, in that way. However, the hon. Gentleman made a very good point —not the last point but the previous one. I am sure that we shall hear the Minister's advice based, as he told me in answer to a parliamentary question only a week ago, on the authority of his legal advisers because he consults them before he——

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Now.

Mr. Morris: Well, he did on 20 January. I asked him a week or so ago, and on a Friday he gave me an answer to my question as to whether he had consulted his legal advisers. His short answer was yes. On that basis, I rely on him. *[Interruption.]* I am being diverted from the main tack of my speech and being seduced by hon. Members of both parties. I must restrain myself or I shall be out of order.

7.45 pm

The new article 171 states:

"If the Court of Justice finds that a Member State has failed to fulfil an obligation under this Treaty, the State shall be required to take the necessary measures to comply with the . . . Court of Justice."

It is now sought to give additional obligations to that requirement by providing that if the defaulting state fails to comply with the judgment of the Court, the Commission shall, after giving the defaulting state

"an opportunity to submit its observations, issue a reasoned opinion"

setting out the points on which the defaulting state has failed to comply. I do not think that anyone could seriously quarrel with that. It is part of the principle of our courts that before reaching decisions, we should give reasons for them. Indeed, there has been a growing tradition for that to be done.

Secondly, under the new proposal, it is suggested that the Commission have a power to bring a defaulting state back before the court with a recommendation that it pay a specified

"lump sum or penalty payment".

The Committee will want to study that suggestion very carefully. In addition, the court is granted the power to impose such a lump sum or penalty payment on the defaulting state.

It could perhaps have been explained in fewer words than used in the two separate paragraphs, but we must take them as they stand: they provide the power to bring the state back to the court and then to impose the penalty.

We want the help of the Minister and, in due course, that of the Attorney-General on this issue, because the new proposal gives the court some teeth by substituting more precise powers for the words

"to take the necessary measures".

If one accepts the principle of the European Court having jurisdiction to adjudicate on European matters, there is clearly a strong argument for such a provision to ensure that there is a better and more precise power of enforcement than that provided by the ambiguous words "necessary measures". Those words do not appeal to me, because they are far too open-ended and not sufficiently precise.

The Committee would be glad to hear why the new power is necessary. That is of the utmost importance. How did the existing powers fail? It is interesting that actions under article 170, by which one member state can bring proceedings against another member state for failure to fulfil an obligation, are rare. There has been only one notable case, which involved France and the United Kingdom in a dispute over the size of fishing net mesh. The United Kingdom was found to be in breach of treaty obligations by the Commission. France took the case to the European Court, which upheld the Commission's opinion.

Article 170 has tended to be used as a threat rather than as a means of vindication, thus avoiding major confrontations between member states. In the section "The Contentious Jurisdiction of the Court" in "Law and Institutions of the European Communities", the learned authors, Messrs Lasok and Bridge said:

"in the last analysis the success of the Communities depends upon the good faith of member states. A member state's failure to implement a judgment given against it would also be likely to have an unfavourable political effect on its relations with its fellow members."

Against the background of the reliance on good faith in the past, one is intrigued by the words:

"One of the innovations of the Maastricht Treaty would be to give the ECJ the right to fine member states for Treaty infringements, a sanction the court has hitherto not been able to apply."

Unhappily, the cases in which member states generally —I said that the United Kingdom is not among them— failed to comply in the correct way are not isolated incidents. In 1990, which is the last date I have, the number of court judgments with which member states failed to comply was 83. In 1989, it was 82. Most cases involved failure to transpose Community directives. More than a third of the cases—33—involved Italy. Perhaps that may be an indication of something. It may be an indication of why this specific provision is required.

Is this additional provision—or these new teeth—necessary because of countries such as Italy? What level of lump sum or penalty is envisaged? There may be other cases in which judgments were made against us, but that one has been drawn to my attention. I am not aware of any failure on our part to comply. I suspect that the United Kingdom is one of the most diligent countries in the European Community.

Given our history of compliance with the court's judgments, what will be the likely exposure of the United Kingdom to such penalties? That may be an unfair question to ask the Minister. I anticipate that we might be in difficulty. There must have been a great deal of consideration before adoption of that part of the treaty dealing with the level of punishment which is envisaged.

The court has a useful function in resolving uncertainties. In view of the court's interpretative role and its powers of interpretation by way of preliminary advice, and in view of amendment No. 27—which we have spent a great deal of time debating in Committee—I wonder whether, if there continues to be uncertainty between the eminent legal advisers who are advising the Minister and the Attorney-General, it might be useful for the Government to refer such a matter to the court.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman has obviously studied this matter carefully, can he tell us whether any guidance is given to the court in article 171 as to the factors that it should take into account in assessing what might be an appropriate fine? Is any guidance given to the judges, or will they simply have to take pot luck?

Is any guidance given in article 170 as to what the court can do when a member state such as Italy, which is a free country in such matters, decides not to pay the fine? I am confused and I would appreciate it if the right hon. and learned Gentleman could explain it to me.

Mr. Morris: Fortunately, I do not have to advise the hon. Gentleman on the Government's views. I am sure that his point will have been heard by them. I suspect that the court will have only the provisions which deal with the setting up of the court itself. If there are other political factors of either a centralising or non-centralising nature, the Committee will be interested in them. I share the hon. Gentleman's curiosity.

If political influences are to be brought to bear on the court, it is necessary for us to consider the new powers. Against that background, the hon. Gentleman has made an important point. It is not for me to clarify his curiosity. He has a second point which I have forgotten—I have not been a Minister for some years.

Sir Teddy Taylor: One of my hon. Friends who knows about these matters—the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) is one of those clever people —told me that the clause simply said that the court should impose fines which it considered appropriate. There was no guidance as to how the court should make that up— whether it should consider damage, political threat or whatever. I do not know whether any other court in the world has such a power. Perhaps the right hon. and learned Gentleman can tell me whether it is a case for establishing a court which will simply determine fines on the basis of what it considers appropriate.

What guidance is contained in the treaty as to what the court, the European Community, or indeed, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs can do if a country does not pay the fine?

Mr. Morris: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for not remembering his second point. I am not interpreting the treaty, but I shall add my voice to his concern. It would appear that the authority to impose a fine is unlimited.

The hon. Gentleman should read article 172, which I shall come to later. I want to have the advice of the Minister and the Attorney-General on the words "unlimited jurisdiction with regard to the penalties".

I am sure that we will receive advice on that. If I am wrong in my interpretation, or if the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) is wrong, it will be a great pleasure for him to hear from the Minister that there is a limit to the powers.

On my reading of the article—I am not advising the Committee, but querying the provision—it seems that the court will have the power simply to impose lump sums or penalty payments which are regarded as appropriate in the circumstances. When articles 171 and 172 are coupled

together, jurisdiction is certainly "unlimited" with regard to the penalties. I wonder what jurisdiction means in that context.

Mr. Budgen: Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman give his opinion about what would happen if a member state refused to pay the fine imposed? Would there be a system, which might be described as a sort of European attachment of earnings order, by which money would go out in some other fund for—shall we say for argument's sake—a well ordered, stable country such as Italy? Let us say, for argument's sake, that Italy said specifically that it felt that it would not pay the fines but, naturally, wanted to receive the tiny subventions which are so generously and willingly given to it. Will there be a system by which the court will be able to say that, if the member state will not pay the money directly, it will deduct the fine out of the country's subsidy, the regional fund or whatever? Will that be possible?

Mr. Morris: I am always delighted to give advice to hon. Members.

Sir Teddy Taylor: How much do you charge?

Mr. Morris: I would prefer it if I could charge but I cannot, I fear, in the circumstances. That is my personal regret. It matters not for the moment.

Mr. Skinner: Is it still guineas?

Mr. Morris: No. We are operating under the metric system.

It appears to me that there is no legal power of enforcement. There is certainly nothing similar to what the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) thought of in his wildest moments as an attachment of earnings order. There are no court bailiffs or periods of imprisonment in default. The political will of the other countries would have to bring to bear whatever pressure they could on the defaulting country. In the treaty there does not appear to be any machinery for enforcement.

8 pm

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Morris: I will give way to the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) in a moment. I ask hon. Gentlemen to restrain themselves because otherwise I shall find myself replying on behalf of the Minister. I noticed one of my colleagues doing that in the previous debate and I do not intend to tread along that path.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I am interested in the right hon. and learned Gentleman's view on unlimited fines. Let us take the example of Welsh lamb. Let us suppose hypothetically that the French Government decided not to allow imports of Welsh lamb into France, heaven forfend. Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman saying from the Labour Front Bench that fines should be limited in such a case? Or does he agree with me that the court should have the power to fine on an unlimited basis so that Welsh sheep producers were entitled to see the French Government pay compensation?

Mr. Morris: As the son of a Welsh sheep farmer and the brother of more than one Welsh sheep farmer, I must declare an interest. I am simply asking the questions which the hon. and learned Gentleman is putting in his own way. Whether the penalty is for preventing the import of Welsh lamb or any other product, should we not be worried about the extent of the penalty? We shall now hear from a much better prophet than me, the Minister of State, to be followed by the Attorney-General.

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman confirm, for the benefit of the Committee, that it is not uncommon in the United Kingdom, where there is no fixed penalty for an offence, for the fine to be at large? We look to the courts to exercise proportionality in such matters. As the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been kind enough to tell the Committee that amendment No. 32 is a probing amendment, I would be grateful if he would say whether he regards such an arrangement as appropriate for the European Court, as, indeed, it is for the British courts.

Mr. Morris: I am sure that the Minister will want to consult about whether it is appropriate with the Attorney-General, who will give a much better view than me.

Mr. Garel-Jones: What is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's view?

Mr. Morris: I am coming to that. If the right hon. Gentleman will have a little patience, of course I shall tell him.

Mr. Budgen: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morris: No, I am sorry, I cannot. I am replying to the Minister. One at a time.

Of course—*[Interruption.]* If the Minister would listen—in our courts we frequently have provision for fines at large. But we have the advantage of knowing what the courts have regarded as reasonable in the past. We have procedures for appeal if the fine is too large. Or indeed, as the Attorney-General will advise the Minister, where the penalty is too lenient the Attorney-General can refer the matter to the Court of Appeal. However, we have the advantage of precedents. We do not have precise precedents for each particular case, but we know how our courts have operated in the past and are likely to operate in the future on the basis of what would be upheld either on appeal by a defendant or on a reference by the Attorney-General.

However, we are giving a new power to the European Court of Justice to impose a penalty. The only power that it previously had was the power which I have referred to as "necessary measures". We are moving from "necessary measures" to fines and lump sums. There are no precedents for a court which is being given a new power. What discussions took place between the participating countries before the provision was agreed? Or did they come to it blind? If they came to it blind, without any idea what the court would impose, a frank and honest answer—which we expect from the Minister—will help the Committee a great deal. Did the countries come to it blind?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I simply seek to ascertain whether the right hon. and learned Gentleman and his party support this provision in the treaty of Maastricht. The Committee would be interested to know that. I shall certainly give the Government's view when I catch your eye, Mr. Lofthouse.

Mr. Morris: Obviously——

Mr. Budgen: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Morris: No. I have given way a great deal and I am grateful for the assistance of the hon. Gentleman.

I suppose that we shall have to wait for the answer to my question. It may well be some hours. It might have helped the Committee to have a preliminary view from the Foreign Office. If it was wrong, it could be corrected by the Attorney-General later. We would then have the advantage——

Mr. Garel-Jones: What is the right hon. and learned Gentleman's view?

Mr. Morris: If the right hon. Gentleman was listening, as I am sure that he was because he is a courteous gentleman, and if he took me at my word, he will know that I said that amendment No. 32 was a probing amendment to discover the extent of the power and what thought was given to an apparently unlimited power. What were the views of the participating powers or did they come to it blind? When he quotes as a parallel what happens in our country, he must learn that we have a system of precedents in our courts. We know from recent and past history—I hope that it will operate in the same way in future—that we have a machinery for appeal.

I cannot see any machinery in the treaty for appeal. If a penalty were imposed which was so great as to bankrupt a country, would the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery be willing to see imposed a penalty which might bankrupt a country?

Mr. Alex Carlile: The right hon. and learned Gentleman gives me the opportunity to reply to him with a good constituency point. The answer to his question, if Montgomeryshire lamb is being burned at Calais harbour, is yes.

Mr. Morris: Well, we know where the hon. and learned Gentleman stands. I have the utmost sympathy with him about the destruction of any food, and particularly Welsh lamb. He may want to develop that argument. I have asked certain questions and we should be interested in the Minister's advice on that aspect.

Mr. Skinner: There is a problem here. Let us suppose that a country decides to break the law and the penalty could bankrupt it. Then the learned people in the Common Market get together and say, "Well, we have a problem here. That country is bankrupt already." It is like this country. We have a £50 billion public sector borrowing requirement. We are up to our neck in debt. We have a balance of payments deficit. People will say, "We would like to make this Tory Government bankrupt but they have already done it." How do they go on then?

Mr. Morris: I am not answering on behalf of the Government.

Mr. Budgen: He should be; he is supporting them.

Mr. Morris: The hon. Gentleman should not jump to too many conclusions.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Could we go back to the interruption by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who, like me, is not a lawyer? Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the people who are appointed from this country—and, indeed, from other countries—are extremely distinguished lawyers? The idea that Judge David Edward or his Scottish predecessor Lord Mackenzie-Stuart would be subject to political pressure is far-fetched. Having had experience of the Court of Human Rights, in a case in which the present Lord Chancellor was counsel, I can say that any political pressure from me or any other body would be dismissed as snash. We would not have dared to do that because it was a formidable operation and it would have been counter-productive. These are impressive people. Is not that part of the answer?

Mr. Morris: I concur with my hon. Friend. Members of the court are extremely distinguished and would do what they could in accordance with their oath. The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) put a particular point and I was seduced into answering it. He was not suggesting that members of the judiciary would have their arms twisted but he was asking a serious question about what guidance would be available. My answer was simply that it is not in the treaty.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman reassure the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) that if a fine were imposed that could bankrupt a country, under the convergence criteria of the Bill that country would be entitled to a substantial grant from the cohesion fund? Will he therefore make it clear that if an excessive fine were imposed a country could get its money back under the cohesion fund?

Mr. Morris: I shall not pursue that argument. I am sure that you, Mr. Lofthouse, would rule me out of order if I were to do so. That matter can be raised in the debate.

Amendment No. 228 deals with article 172—an important article that we have already begun to consider. The article contains a curious phrase:

"Unlimited jurisdiction with regard to penalties"

I should like the advice of the Attorney-General on this matter. If unlimited penalties could be imposed under the article, it is a draconian measure. What concerns me—this is where we need clarification—is whether article 172, interpreted with article 171, confirms the view that I have expressed that there does not appear to be any power to limit in any shape or form the amount of the lump sum or the penalty. That needs to be justified.

Article 172 proposes an additional restriction:

"Regulations adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council . . . pursuant to the provisions of this Treaty, may give the Court of Justice unlimited jurisdiction."

8.15 pm

That introduces the European Parliament for the first time and makes the application of the unlimited jurisdiction dependent on its adoption by both parties, Parliament and the Council. I would find it very difficult to support amendment No. 228, but I know that concern has been expressed and we should be reassured about what "unlimited jurisdiction" means.

The new article 168a creates a mandatory obligation that a court of first instance shall be created and the Council's power is limited. After consulting the Commission and the European Parliament, and acting unanimously, the Council shall determine the type of case that a court of first instance is to hear, and its constitution.

Why has a mandatory power been substituted for the existing discretionary power? What has changed? I recall some years ago, if my memory is correct, that the

machinery of the European Court was clogged by it having to take up so much of its time resolving domestic disputes arising from the rights, duties and obligations of its employees. Against that background, we should like to know a little more about the court of first instance. If it is the same as the one that is functioning already, perhaps we could be less apprehensive, but it would interest the Committee to learn why this new mandatory power has been substituted and what the background was to the agreement of all the parties.

I need not comment on amendment No. 330 because it is the same as amendment No. 32; likewise amendment No. 331 is the same as amendment No. 228. Amendment No. 411 proposes that the European Court of Justice should be required to sit in plenary session—attended by all its members—

"when a Member State or a Community institution is a party to the proceedings".

It is proposed to add the words:

"When a party to the procedures requests it to".

Under existing provisions, it is required to sit in plenary session in such a case regardless of the wishes of the parties. The Committee would like to know why this new requirement has been inserted in the treaty, what caused it, whether there were any specific problems with the operation of the existing article and why it is proposed to come into effect.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman remind me—I am sorry if I did not hear him correctly—which amendment he is referring to?

Mr. Morris: I am referring, unless the order has changed, to article 32 and to amendment No. 411, which proposes that the court should

"sit in plenary session when a Member State or a Community institution that is a party to the proceedings"

requests it. I hope that I have referred to the correct amendment.

Mr. Garel-Jones *indicated assent.*

Mr. Morris: I see that the Minister acknowledges that I have. If that is the case, why was that change made? What was the background?

I repeat that amendment No. 32 is a probing amendment. I hope that I have not wearied the House unduly by commenting on some of the other amendments. We would be grateful for the Minister's view about these matters.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I thank the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) for making it clear that amendment No. 32 is a probing amendment which has been moved by the Opposition Front Bench to allow us to discuss these important matters.

Amendment No. 32 seeks to delete from the Bill article 171 of the Maastricht treaty. That article gives the European Court of Justice a new power to impose fines on member states which do not comply with earlier judgments by the court in respect of their carrying out their Community obligations.

Although the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon has quite legitimately raised several issues, as amendment No. 32 is a probing amendment, I take it that the Opposition are broadly content that article 171 should be included in the treaty. The power in the article is perhaps the most important new power to be given to the European Court of Justice by the Maastricht treaty. That power was given to the court on the initiative of the United Kingdom Government. The provision of that new power for the court is something that we regard as one of our achievements in the Maastricht negotiations.

It would not be unfair to say that one of the aspects of the European Community that has caused justified anxiety among our citizens and among successive British Governments is that, while as one of the Marx brothers would have said, "Nobody's perfect", the British Government seek internationally, in general, and in the European Community, in particular, to comply as rigorously as we can with our legal obligations.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon was good enough to quote figures to the Committee. Perhaps I can amplify those figures by quoting the number of references to the European Court of Justice between 1987 and 1991. I will not read out the whole list, but Italy heads the list with 87 references. Greece has 52 and Belgium 47. At the bottom of the list there is Portugal with five references, Denmark with eight and the United Kingdom with nine. While I have not worked out the proportion of references bearing in mind the relative sizes of the United Kingdom, Denmark and Portugal, the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon was right when he said that United Kingdom Governments, as a general proposition, seek to be diligent in complying with the law.

There is general agreement, certainly on the Conservative Benches, that the single market and the free trade area that is the European Community matters very much to Britain. If that single market is to succeed, we need to ensure that the European Court of Justice has the ability to enforce that single market. We must ensure that there is a system of justice in the European Community which is capable of enforcing that single market which matters so much to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stuart Randall (Kingston upon Hull, West): As a matter of interest, can the Minister give us some idea of what the nine referrals, in relation to the United Kingdom, involved?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I cannot provide that information off the cuff. However, if I can provide it after advice before I conclude my remarks, I will do so.

The Committee would expect any United Kingdom Government to behave in the way that I have described. In the list to which I have referred, the United Kingdom has never been taken to the European Court of Justice twice. I regret to say that, on occasions, member states have been taken to the court, have been found to be not in compliance, have not then complied and have been taken to the court once again. Such cases have rightly caused indignation in the House and in Britain as a whole. That is why this most extensive new power for the court was brought forward on a British initiative. We make no apology for that. Indeed, we regard it as one of our achievements in the negotiations that the court should have the new power.

Mr. Budgen: My right hon. Friend will appreciate that the term "enforcement" has a special meaning for lawyers. If my right hon. Friend will forgive me, he is saying that there is an additional penalty which is a fine. The problem is that there is no method of enforcement.

Mr. Alex Carlile: What about Wolverhampton magistrates court?

Mr. Budgen: For the sake of argument, the European Court of Justice can say to the Italians, "We hereby fine you 3 million ecu." However, there is no reason to suppose that the Italians will be any more willing to hand over 3 million ecu than they have been to disclose the number of olive trees that they possess. The difficulty is that the European institutions have half the pretensions of a state, but they do not have all the means of a state.

Mr. Denzil Davies: What about an army?

Mr. Budgen: Exactly. If the Wolverhampton magistrates court, to which the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) has just referred, fines me £1,000 and I do not pay it, in the end a policeman can come and feel my collar and take me to the Wolverhampton magistrates court——

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. The hon. Gentleman is making a lengthy intervention which is very nearly a speech. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take note of what I have said.

Mr. Budgen: In the end, the Army can enforce the fine. If I refuse to deal with the police, the Army can be brought in. In the end, the state depends on force. As I was saying to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister, those institutions have the pretensions, but not the means, of a state.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that short speech and for the fact that he inadvertently, no doubt impressed by the legal skills that I have already demonstrated to the Committee, described me as his right hon. and learned Friend. I am sure that he would wish that to be corrected. If I may say so mischievously, my hon. Friend has been giving the House the benefit of his views on enforcement in another context. The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon also touched on that point and I shall deal with it later in my speech.

Mr. Dalyell: The mind boggles at the thought of the Shropshire light infantry being sent south to sort out the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen)—*[Interruption.]* His own regiment would doubtless not comply. However, it is a serious issue. Can we have a comparison like for like, because neither the figures for Germany nor those for France were given? Either on advice, or from his brief, can the Minister give us the comparisons? Those of us who have experience, albeit of the indirectly elected European Parliament, know that Italy is sui generis and comparisons with France or the Federal Republic might be more relevant.

8.30 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I did not want to weary the Committee, but I have the figures to hand. They are Italy 87; Greece 52; Belgium 47; France 34; Germany 34; Netherlands 20; Ireland 18; Luxembourg 16; Spain 12; United Kingdom nine; Denmark eight; and Portugal five.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am responding to the point raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

The cases against Britain were two cases on the internal market, two cases on environment, three on statistics, one on the customs union and one on employment. I regret that I do not have the details on each individual case.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall make a little progress and then I shall give way.

The first point that I would seek to establish—I do not think there will be any difference between myself and the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon or the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) that Britain took the initiative to give the court those powers—is that we feel, not over-boastfully, that we are diligent in seeking to comply with the law. We feel that some member states are perhaps not as diligent as they should be and therefore it is right that the European Court should have the right to back up its judgment with a fine.

Mr. Marlow: We have a problem with Greece. Europe has a responsibility for trade policy and has decided to take trade sanctions against Serbia to prevent arms, fuel and other supplies of war from getting into Serbia. Yet Greece is pouring the stuff in as if there were no tomorrow. Under the existing trade policy, is it mandatory that Greece should impose sanctions, or is it voluntary? Will it be mandatory or voluntary under the Maastricht treaty? In either case, what will the court do about it and, if the court does nothing, what can we do to make sure that the court does something—and in quick time because there is a war going on?

Mr. Garel-Jones: First, any decisions taken now under European political co-operation and later, when the Maastricht treaty is ratified, under the common foreign and security policy, would not come under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. My hon. Friend is quite right that decisions that have a trade implication are often taken under European political co-operation and eventually under the common foreign and security policy. Therefore, a foreign policy decision by member states could trigger a trading action or sanction by the Community. Once an aspect of any decision moves into the competence of the Commission and the treaty of Rome, the European Court of Justice is able to rule on it.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way in a moment, but I must make some progress.

One of the important questions that the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon raised was whether I could give him a flavour—it would be no more than that—as to whether the European Court of Justice was beginning, in its creative judgments—I think that was the term he used—to move in a less centralising way than it has done in the past.

The Committee has had a lengthy and interesting debate on this issue, prompted by my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) who is in his place. Without wearying the Committee in a repetitious way, no more than any hon. Member would seek to anticipate judgments by our own courts, I would not want to anticipate judgments by the European Court on any matter. However, this is one debate that has raged throughout the Committee. The Government believe that in the Maastricht treaty and the tendency within Europe the tide is beginning to turn against centralism.

In the debate on 27 January I was able to quote three recent cases where the judgments of the European Court have seemed to be more in favour of the positions of member states. The first was in July 1992 on national insurance contributions, where the court upheld the maintenance of different state pensions for men and women in the United Kingdom. In December 1992, in the most recent batch of Sunday trading cases, the Court upheld the United Kingdom Sunday trading legislation. Finally, in a judgment that concerns the environment, in the Wallonia waste disposal case, the Court upheld a ban on the import of waste by the Belgian region of Wallonia and in doing so allowed generous derogations from article 30 of the treaty.

Although it would be wrong and inappropriate for me to try to anticipate specific judgments, I believe that there is some evidence that the climate created by the Maastricht negotiations has brought about change. The Committee touched on the subject in the previous debate when my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary was able to demonstrate that article 3b on subsidiarity, even before it has come into effect, has already had a significant impact on the way in which the Commission goes about its work. I hope that without any disrespect to the European Court of Justice, it would not be improper to say that there is some indication that it may be moving in the way in which the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggested.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Since Greece has been mentioned, may I ask about the implications for Britain if Greece were to be treated according to the proposals from the bureaucrats in Brussels? If we got the same percentage per capita as Greece, we would have to pay no income tax, corporation tax, heritage tax or VAT and we would be able to have vast advantages. That must be addressed whether we are centralists or decentralists.

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. I do not know how the hon. and learned Member's intervention relates to the European Court of Justice. If he will base his question on the court, I shall deem it to be in order.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Certainly, Mr. Lofthouse. As someone who has probably appeared in the European Court of Justice more often than anyone else in the Chamber, I understand what you say. The most important matter which I have had to address was whether brut meant that the wine in the bottle had been grown from grapes from a vine in soil over which German was the official language. Against that background, I think that I do know something about the court. It is important that we understand that this trivialist, asinine, bureaucratic and unjuridical farce should be restricted rather than enlarged.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I always listen with interest and respect to what my hon. and learned Friend says. I believe it to be the case, as do the Government, that many of the abuses and problems by which our citizens, the House of Commons and the Committee have been disturbed are met by the Maastricht treaty. The amendment that we are debating, which bears on the ability of the European Court to impose fines, is just one opportunity to demonstrate that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) raised in an intervention the important question of whether there is no limit to the fines.

Sir Teddy Taylor: No guidance.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Yes, whether there is a limit and whether there is guidance. I said—this was confirmed by the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon and the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery—that it is not uncommon in Britain, where there is no fixed penalty, for a fine to be at large. The right hon. and learned Gentleman was able to say that as the legal and judicial system in Britain has a slightly longer pedigree than that of the European Court of Justice, there is a body of precedent which gives us some guidance on what we can rely upon.

The existing treaties already give powers to fine under competition policy, to which article 87 refers. Those powers are not subject to limit or guidance. The position so far is that the Commission imposes the fine, after which there may be an appeal to the court. On many occasions the court has reduced or confirmed such fines. There is a body of practice. I am not aware that there has ever been any objection to that or to the fines imposed being too high or out of proportion. I should tell the right hon. and learned Gentleman that consideration was given to whether there should be a limit. That consideration was given before the signing of the treaty. It was decided to rely upon the discretion of the court, which it has already shown, in the cases to which I referred, albeit in the areas of competition and anti-dumping. We believed—I understand that other member states take the same position—that the court could be trusted in this matter.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall complete my response and then I shall give way, first, to the right hon. Member for Llanelli, because he has been waiting rather longer than others for the opportunity to intervene. I shall then give way to a small selection of my hon. Friends.

The talk of fines that will bankrupt a country is pure fantasy. I am confident that the court will show the sense of proportion which it has always demonstrated.

Mr. Budgen: Why?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend has made a sedentary observation.

Sir Teddy Taylor: It is the Commission.

8.45 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to contain himself. I realise that it is difficult sometimes to do that. I am often an excitable and voluble person. If my hon. Friend contains himself, I promise that I shall give way to him in due course. There is no need for him to pop up, as it were, and wave at me.

The answer to the sedentary interjection of my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen) was given by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). When we consider the calibre of those from the United Kingdom and other countries who have been chosen to sit on the European Court of Justice, I think that any reasonable person who is not indulging in fantasies will recognise that it is a distinguished court that is entirely impervious to any sort——

Mr. Cash: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall give way in due course. As I have said, I want to complete my response to the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and Opposition Members.

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

The answer is that we considered, of course, whether there should be a limit to the fines. We believed that the discretion of the court could be relied upon. The fine is proposed by or is a recommendation from the Commission. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East is right about that. However, the court decides—not the Commission—whether that fine is appropriate and proportionate.

Mr. Denzil Davies: I wish to ask a general question about article 171. We have now discovered that a very distinguished court will be moderate in imposing fines. As I read article 171, a member state is required to take certain measures to comply with the judgment of the court. Let us suppose that Her Majesty's Government could take those measures only after an affirmative vote of the House of Commons. Let us suppose also that they failed for some reason—that happens from time to time—and were unable to secure the affirmative vote so as to have authority to take the necessary measures. Would the Government still be fined?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I shall seek to give the right hon. Gentleman an authoritative reply when I have been properly advised. It is a good and important question and I shall seek to give him——

Mr. John Morris: Properly advised!

Mr. Garel-Jones: I am seeking to the best of my ability to take seriously the questions that are put to me. I make no apology to the Committee. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has teased me quite properly. On one occasion I gave the best legal advice that was available to me at the time, which proved to be incorrect. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made a statement to the House of Commons as soon as the changed advice was available to us and apologised to the House. I accept that the right hon. and learned Gentleman will tease me about that. If I am asked a serious question by a senior Labour Back-Bench Member who is a Privy Councillor and I am not confident that I can answer it off the top of my head, I think that it is right that I should seek proper advice.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make progress——

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Garel-Jones: Of course.

Mr. Hughes: I ask a question in all honesty. We were told that the Law Officers would be here to give authoritative advice. Why cannot we have that advice? The Law Officers are here.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Law Officers are here to answer any points of law that may be raised. If any point of law arises that I am not briefed to answer or if any such matter needs consideration, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General will give the Committee the advice that it seeks.

Mr. Cash: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. The Minister has just said that the Attorney-General will come forward and give opinions on matters of law. But the whole of this treaty is a matter of law. Therefore we are entitled to the Attorney-General's opinion on any question that arises.

The First Deputy Chairman: That is not the responsibility of the Chair; it is a matter for Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: There is another point to which I wish to reply.

Sir Richard Body (Holland with Boston): My right hon. Friend said that the United Kingdom Government were instrumental in proposing these new powers for the European Court. Before making that proposal, did they, perchance, study what had happened in the United States of America? When the American Supreme Court was given additional powers, it became an engine for federalism and for the centralisation of power. Was that example considered by the Foreign Office?

Mr. Garel-Jones: I have already explained at some length why we regard this as an important new power for the European Court of Justice and why it was an initiative of the British Government. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is a staunch supporter of the Single European Act. I do not think that the figures I have quoted and the inability of the European Court to assert its authority by way of a fine are at all satisfactory.

Mr. Cash: Perhaps the Minister could explain why nobody knows who has given a judgment. Judgments are delivered anonymously. That is a pretty extraordinary state of affairs for such a distinguished court as my right hon. Friend has described. Secondly, can my right hon. Friend explain why, to all intents and purposes, it is the Advocate-General who gives the main thrust of the advice at the end of the day? Thirdly, why, in a recent case—as I was told by one of the plaintiffs—did the judges not even have their translation equipment up to their ears, so that they could not even hear what was going on?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend is fond of anecdotal evidence. He says that someone told him that the judges did not have their translation equipment up to their ears. The Committee will not expect me to treat that point even remotely seriously. I can hardly be expected to take seriously yet another example of anecdotal evidence. On a previous occasion my hon. Friend quoted a letter. He would not tell us who had written it. We asked him to place it in the Library, but he would not do so. The debate cannot be conducted on that basis. *[Interruption.]*

The First Deputy Chairman: Order. It will be helpful to the Committee if the Minister is given silence to answer the questions that have been put to him.

Mr. Garel-Jones: On the question of the Advocate-General, my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford is simply wrong. These are collective judgments for the court.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The right hon. Gentleman has put us in a dilemma. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I tabled probing amendments. The Minister knows that we did not intend to press them to a vote. My right hon. and learned Friend the shadow Attorney-General initiated the debate specifically for the purpose of putting questions to the Government. My right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has put a very pertinent matter before the Committee. When will

we receive an answer to his question? The Attorney-General is sitting next to the Minister. It would be easy for the Minister to give way to the right hon. and learned Gentleman so that we might be given a definitive answer. What my right hon. Friend has said is very important. The only purpose of our amendments is to establish exact meaning.

Mr. Garel-Jones: That is a perfectly reasonable intervention, except to the extent that, so far, I have sought—perhaps inadequately—to answer four of the points that were made by the right hon. and learned Gentleman. There are more to come. I have told the Committee that before I finish my speech I shall seek to reply to the points that have been made.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make some progress and then I shall give way to hon. Members who have asked me to do so.

Mr. Marlow: Will my right hon. Friend give way for a question about the matter that has been raised by the hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies)?

Mr. Garel-Jones: No. I shall reply to that question when I am able to do so. If my hon. Friend wishes to intervene at that stage, I shall give way to him.

Mr. Marlow *rose*——

Mr. Garel-Jones: I want to make some progress in answering the questions that have been put to me by the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman asked about the court of first instance. In article 168a, the treaty confirms the existence of the court of first instance, which was set up in 1988. The original version of article 168a was introduced in the Single European Act. Yet again, we can be grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford. Narrow limits were placed on the potential jurisdiction of the court of first instance. Only actions brought by natural or legal persons and staff cases could be transferred to the court. That potential jurisdiction is now very nearly used up.

Thus, we welcome the fact that the new version of article 168a allows the Council, by unanimity, to assign to the court of first instance any category of jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, without limit and without need of further treaty amendment. I hasten to reassure the Committee that this article does not represent an absolute increase in jurisdiction, but simply refers to how jurisdiction should be divided between the two courts.

The court of first instance has proved itself an efficient and respected tribunal in its limited field—competition and staff cases—and, in our view, it should be used for more cases for the purpose of speeding up the process of justice. The simpler procedure for expanding its jurisdiction which the Maastricht treaty introduces will facilitate moves to reduce the work load of the Court of Justice and the attendant delays in litigation. I repeat that the United Kingdom strongly supports the rule of law in the Community. We depend on the court to enforce it. That is why we have consistently sought, in the negotiations relating to both the Single European Act and the Maastricht treaty, to facilitate the effective dispatch, as it were, of the court's business and thus assist it in its task of upholding the law.

Mr. Marlow: I am sorry to come back to a question that I asked before, to which my right hon. Friend kindly gave me half an answer. It concerns the problem of Greece. What can the court do to prevent Greece from carrying on sanctions-busting with regard to Serbia and the war? If it cannot do anything now, what will it be able to do after the treaty is in place? What action can we take to make the court take action so that we have a level playing field on this issue?

Mr. Garel-Jones: My hon. Friend, as he rightly says, has asked me this question before. I have given him the answer that I think I should, and I do not want to go any further on that.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Does not my right hon. Friend consider that it is perhaps erroneous to give the impression that there is a huge advance in judiciary powers in the court when, if he reads article 171, he will see that it says that, after the judgment is made, the Commission will decide if it has been complied with, the Commission will declare a time limit by which it must be done, the Commission will recommend the fine, and it is only at the final point that there is an appeal to the court? Does he accept that, while there may be a good case and a bad case for article 171, it could mislead the Committee if the impression were given that there was an advance in the judicial system? It is an advance in the powers of the Commission, which can say that it has not been done, this is when it must be done, and this is the recommended fine. Would not it be fairer to express it in that way?

9 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: Unlike my hon. Friend and, I think, like the majority of the members of the Committee, I do not regard, nor do I think that the United Kingdom should regard, either the European Court of Justice or the Commission as our enemy. I want the Commission to be effective in seeking out areas where compliance is not taking place. I want it to be robust in pursuing that. I want it to make recommendations to the European Court. I repeat that the amount of the fine will be decided by the court, not by the Commission.

Mr. Budgen: This is not on the substance of the answer that my right hon. Friend intends to give to the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies)—it is about the process of discussion. Will he explain to the Committee why the Foreign Office put forward this procedure as an exciting new addition to the powers of the institutions of the Community without being in a position to brief my right hon. Friend about the method by which the money for a fine might be raised even in Britain? I quite understand that there might be a difference of opinion as between the Foreign Office legal advisers and the Attorney-General, but it is absolutely amazing that my right hon. Friend can stand as proud as a peacock before the Committee saying that this is one of the great advantages of Maastricht that we and the heroes of the Foreign Office have achieved, yet cannot even tell us from his Foreign Office advice how the system would work in this country. It seems to me to be grossly incompetent.

Mr. Garel-Jones: All that I can say to that is that my hon. Friend is easily astonished. I know that I will not be

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

able to convince him of this, but I hope that other Members in all parts of the Committee will not feel that I have been presumptuous or arrogant in my approach.

Mr. Jenkin: As regards the additional power and discretion that article 171 gives to the Commission, my right hon. Friend is extremely fond of telling the Committee that the Commission is not a signatory to this treaty and therefore its centralising aspirations are of no consequence. But here we have an example of huge additional power and discretion being given to the Commission in the exercise of its centralising agenda.

Mr. Garel-Jones: In the previous debate my hon. Friend sought to give a quotation that was incomplete and he had to be pulled up by the Foreign Secretary. I am afraid that I must now pull him up, too. I have never said that the Commission's ambitions and agenda are of no consequence. Of course, the Commission has an agenda and of course it has a substantial amount of power within the European community. It is required by the treaty to have power. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend would be careful not to say that I have said any such thing.

Mr. Hoon: Dealing with the relationship between articles 171 and 172, the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) pointed out rightly that it is for the Commission to recommend the amount of penalty or fine appropriate in the circumstances——

Sir Teddy Taylor: Specify, not recommend.

Mr. Hoon: Very well, specify. Presumably that has some reference to the nature of the harm done, and the Commission might calculate along those lines. The Minister responds properly by saying that then the court has the right to determine the amount at large—there being no limit. In that eventuality, why is article 172 necessary at all? I know that article 172 is an ancient provision that has been only slightly changed by the addition of the European Parliament, but if the amount of the fine in article 171 is at large, presumably there is no need for any regulation.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Article 172 is a purely technical amendment which seeks to reflect the European Parliament's enhanced legislative role under the negative assent procedure of article 189B. Hence the reference to regulations—a point raised by the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon as well, so I can respond to both Members at the same time—adopted jointly by the European Parliament and the Council.

It is important to remember—the hon. Gentleman, who still has a double mandate, will be well aware of this—that the Council remains the decision-making body and that the European Parliament may block legislation after the Council has taken its final decision that may not amend it.

There is a second point that I would like to make to the Committee about the role and powers of the court which picks up a point that I think was made in the earlier debate about subsidiarity. The role and powers of the court—the Committee should remember this—were set out in the original Community treaties.

The treaty of Rome describes the court's basic tasks in article 164:

"The Court of Justice shall ensure observance of law and justice in the interpretation and application of this Treaty."

The treaty goes on to set out the basic jurisdiction of the court, the remedies available and the procedures. Those have not substantially changed, either in the Single European Act or at Maastricht.

Naturally, as member states have decided to increase the competences of the Community, so the ambit of the court's jurisdiction has been increased. But most of the fears about the role of the court raised by critics of the treaty in and outside the House are fears about powers that the court already has. The critics often claim that they are not against the existing treaties, only against this treaty. There is an illogicality there which my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary pointed out in the previous debate and which it is entirely appropriate to point out again.

The most substantial new power given to the European Court in the Maastricht treaty is this new power for imposing fines, and, as I say, it was given on the initiative of the United Kingdom. It will go a substantial way to improve observance and compliance with Community law and that is something that we in the United Kingdom welcome.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Forgetting for the moment what changes the treaty may make on fining, the fact is that the European Court has abrogated to itself powers of the interpretation——

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. It is in order for an hon. Member to be talking to the civil servants in the Box during the debate?

The First Deputy Chairman: It would not be in order if he was seeking advice.

Mr. Cash: I am not seeking advice; I am giving it.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: I was trying to give advice as well—to the Committee.

What is important is not the increased powers under the Bill—let us ignore them—but the fact that the Court of Justice has abrogated to itself powers that were never intended and interprets the law of this land, far less of the other members of the Community, present or apparent, in a manner which overrides the distinctive principles of our law, our judges and our courts. That is my concern. Having appeared in the court frequently, I am worried that, when the Advocate-General gives judgment, the judges wander in and wander out to their chauffeurs.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I would go along with my hon. and learned Friend up to a certain point. We had an interesting debate about this some weeks ago. There is no doubt that over the past 10 or 20 years many judgments of the European Court have been of a centralising tendency. I also contend that there is now evidence—growing evidence once we have ratified this treaty—that the mood and climate has changed, but the principle of the jurisdiction of the European Court was set out in the treaty of Rome. To the extent that this treaty does anything at all, the only areas in which it enhances the court's powers to a considerable degree are those to which I have referred.

There are two other points which have been raised by hon. Members, including that raised by the right hon. Member for Llanelli to which I am anxious to reply. The

first leads on from a point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. That has also been taken up by other Members.

There is no specific procedure in the treaty for the enforcement of fines against member states. The intergovernmental conference considered various possibilities, including a mechanism for direct deduction of the amount of a fine from payments due to a member state from the Community budget, for example, from agriculture structural funds. It was decided not to do that, partly because it would tend to hit the wrong people. Why should Italian farmers suffer because Italy had failed to implement a directive totally unrelated to their fields?

That was the reason why we decided not to go down the road of direct deduction—*[Interruption.]* I am trying as best I can to answer my hon. Friends. We considered direct deductions during the intergovernmental conference and rejected them for the reason I have just given the Committee. In the end it was considered that member states who were shamed in this public way, in addition to the public ignominy of being fined by the European Court, are under a treaty obligation to pay their fines, and that they could be expected to pay.

If that proves not to be the case—I do not expect this—we shall not hesitate to propose and press for an amendment to be introduced into the treaty providing for a mechanism for direct deductions of such fines.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon put his finger on it while he was asking his question. He was reminding the Committee that there is no process for enforcement in that way. He said that he felt that in the end it would be peer pressure, political pressure, that would shame member states which were fined into paying. That is what we expect. That is the judgment that we made during the negotiations. If it proves not to be the case, I have no doubt that in the next intergovernmental conference in 1996, one of the things that Her Majesty's Government will be seeking to do is to ensure that a method of enforcement is brought in.

Mr. Rogers: The Minister's last remark fills me with dismay—that political peer pressure is expected to get countries to pay fines. I do not think that that answer is good enough. I think it was the Davignon plan, introduced in 1980, which made steel allocations to member states. In the United Kingdom capacity had to be reduced from 22 million to 11 million liquid tonnes. We complied with that. At the same time as our steel workers were being put out of work, the Italians increased their steel-making capacity. Under the regulations laid down by the treaty of Rome, the Commission imposed a fine which I understand it has never been able to collect. In this instance, with the unlimited fines that might be imposed under this botched-up provision, how will payment of the fines be enforced?

9.15 pm

Mr. Garel-Jones: I do not want to be dismissive, but I hope that the hon. Member is not being deliberately obscurantist. I have explained to the Committee that we considered the option of direct deductions. The member states—not just the United Kingdom—came to the conclusion that it was sufficient for the time being to give these extra powers to the European Court. If the procedure does not seem to be working in the way that we hope it will, we will seek to build on it when the next opportunity arises.

Mr. Randall: I have a genuine doubt about peer group pressure. It has already been reported publicly that the Italians have had 87 referrals, the Greeks 57 and the Belgians 47. One would think that peer group pressure would have worked for referrals rather than having to rely on fines. I am not sure that pressure would increase appreciably because a fine had been imposed. I am doubtful whether the provision will work without strong enforcement.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The hon. Gentleman is right.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I accept the reservations expressed by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, West (Mr. Randall), which are supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East. If their fears prove to be the case, I have no doubt that we will seek to give even further powers to the European Court of Justice; I am sure that we would have the support of my hon. Friend in that endeavour.

The right hon. Member for Llanelli asked whether we would be fined if we were found to be in breach by the European Court and were denied by the House the means to give effect to the Court's judgment. The answer is yes. A state cannot invoke its inability to give effect to a treaty obligation as a reason for not complying with a judgment. I do not expect the United Kingdom to be in that position. I regard it as a relatively far-fetched example. The United Kingdom has never yet failed to give effect to a judgment, and I find it hard to believe that the Committee would deny the Government the means to implement a lawful judgment.

Mr. Denzil Davies: Perhaps it is not so far-fetched. There might be a minority Government who could not get a majority. On that basis, what would be the legal authority for Her Majesty's Government paying the money? On the one hand the European Court would impose a fine; on the other, Her Majesty's Government would be stealing British money in order to pay the fine.

Mr. Garel-Jones: I hear what the right hon. Gentleman says and I will give him what I hope is a brisk and proper reply. Understandably—and I make no complaint about this—the right hon. Gentleman deploys all his considerable intellect and ingenuity to find——

Sir Teddy Taylor: Please just answer the question for once.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If my hon. Friend could restrain himself for a moment, I am seeking to reply to a very important question asked by a right hon. Gentleman. I do not need the advice of my hon. Friend while I am doing so. If my hon. Friend then wishes to ask a question, I will happily try to answer him.

The right hon. Gentleman put forward what I regard as an unlikely hypothesis, one in which the United Kingdom has not yet found itself. My answer to his question is that if—it is a consummation for which the Liberal party devoutly wishes—after a general election we had a hung Parliament, and a coalition Government of some description, one principle would underpin that Government and Parliament, the principle that I adumbrated at the outset of my remarks. It is that we in

[Mr. Garel-Jones]

Britain believe, not only in this country but in the European Community, in the rule of law. I cannot believe that the House of Commons would deny any British Government the ability to comply with their legal obligations.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Lofthouse. You will appreciate that this is an important debate about a very important institution that can overrule this Parliament and any decision taken by it. The Minister made a brave effort in difficult circumstances, but I was reminded—I do not mean this pejoratively—of a donkey trying to pull a six-furrow plough. The Minister has beside him the Attorney-General. Questions have been put and have not been answered. Will it be possible for the Attorney-General to respond later in the debate because a whole series of issues need to be cleared up——

The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means: Order. I responded to the hon. Gentleman when he put the same point earlier. He knows that it is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I suggest to the Minister that the answer to the question posed by the right hon. Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) about the legal authority for the payment of a fine is the Bill that we are debating, if it is enacted. That would appear to give the British Government the authority to pay a fine, even if an affirmative resolution had not been passed by this Parliament.

It may sound far-fetched, but it is true that on the hills of Plynlimon and Penybontfawr in my constituency there are some hard-working and rather impoverished people who, although they may not realise that what they have in mind is article 171 of the treaty, actually care greatly about the meat of that article—and I hope that I shall be forgiven for the pun on the word "meat."

Two or three years ago, I arrived at the Montgomery county show in my constituency on the day on which some French farmers had set fire to lorryloads of Welsh lamb. That action caused great anger, particularly because at the time the French Government seemed to be turning the other cheek and showing less than full interest in what had happened near the French channel ports. They appeared to be less than enthusiastic about bringing to justice the perpetrators of those activities, who had been filmed on television and were clearly identifiable.

I recall that on that occasion we started in Montgomeryshire a temporary but effective boycott on the purchase of French wine, an action that would have pained at least one Conservative Member, although I do not see him in his place right now. The farmers who were behind that boycott of French wine, which was well supported by an independent supermarket in my constituency, had a particular point in mind. It was the difficulty of enforcing treaty obligations under the treaty of Rome, particularly those relating to fair competition in the selling of goods across borders, when Governments were reluctant to ensure that those obligations were honoured.

I am sure that it is with that general subject in mind, of which Welsh sheepmeat is an example, that the Government sensibly suggested that there should be a new article 171. If that means that enforcement of treaty obligations will be achieved more successfully, it will be welcomed on the slopes of Plynlimon and the hills around Penybontfawr.

We have heard some interesting statistics from the Minister of State about successful complaints to the Court of Justice of the European Communities. It is comforting to know that the United Kingdom Government come near the bottom of the league table—indeed, in proportional terms they are probably at the very bottom. It follows that, relatively speaking, the United Kingdom obeys the laws of the European Community and the treaty obligations. That very statistic, however, is evidence of the frustration that is felt by sheep farmers in my constituency.

What those sheep farmers feel may be replicated in many industries throughout the country, both manufacturing and service. They feel that the French Government in particular have been less than enthusiastic about obeying the obligations imposed by the treaty of Rome and the amendments made to it. They feel that the United Kingdom should perhaps have copied the example of the French, and banned the import of French goods. Perhaps we should have discriminated against French wines; perhaps lorryloads of bottles should have been broken as they entered our channel ports.

The law-abiding farmers of Montgomeryshire, however, would far rather have a level playing field for the enforcement of treaty obligations than follow the rather unseemly example set by the conduct of French farmers towards sheepmeat from the hills of Montgomeryshire, which is the finest in the world.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlile: I will give way in a moment.

Mr. Rogers: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Carlile: I shall give way first to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker); then I shall give way to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

Mr. Rogers: I was only going to be facetious about Rhondda sheep.

Mr. Carlile: In that case, I shall not give way to the hon. Gentleman.

If what the Government proposed at Maastricht means that treaty obligations can be enforced more effectively, we should all welcome that on grounds of common sense.

Mr. Walker: The hon. and learned Gentleman has had a distinguished career in the courts. Does he really believe that the imposition of any fine is worth anything when there is no means of enforcing payment? Can he provide evidence of such a system actually working?

Mr. Carlile: I strongly suspect that it will be easier to enforce fines in the Court of Justice in the European Communities through political peer pressure, as it has been called, than to enforce fines in the Wolverhampton magistrates court—which was mentioned earlier—in the case of impecunious defendants who have no intention of paying. The point that has been made about enforcement is about as bad as any that we have heard in the House, even in debates on Maastricht.

I am pleased that the Attorney-General is present. I am sure that he will recognise the seriousness of the point that

I am about to make. The structure of new article 171 strikes me at least as very fair. It ensures that a finding will be made that there has been a failure to fulfil an obligation; it ensures that a carefully considered recommendation is made to the court about the level of the fine; and it gives the court—a very experienced and high-quality court—jurisdiction to consider the level at which the fine should be imposed.

It is possible, however, that during the time that that will take, several lambing seasons will pass before enforcement takes place. Can Ministers assure us that one of the aims of the new article, and one of the purposes of the discussions surrounding it, was to ensure that it was rendered effective?

If I have to go back to the sheep farmers in what I believe is still the most agricultural constituency and tell them that the new rules look good but will be ineffectual, I shall not be offering them much comfort. If, however, I can tell them that the new structure, which provides chambers of a small number of judges to deal with these matters, will offer an efficient and effective remedy, then, in the example that I gave, the French Government would be forced to pay their fine. It would be a great comfort to me if I were to be assured that the enforcement of a fine would mean that the money was paid to those very farmers who had lost as a result of the illegal activity of a foreign Government.

Mr. Rogers *rose*——

Mr. Carlile: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman on the condition that he does not disappoint us, that he is not facetious and that he has a serious point to make. If he is going to make a point about the quality of sheep from Rhondda, may I settle with him now? If I say that sheep from Rhondda produce sheepmeat as good as that from Montgomeryshire, will it satisfy him?

9.30 pm

Mr. Rogers: That point is not worth answering. I wish to ask the hon. and learned Gentleman about the enforcement of fines. He said earlier, I presume in answer to the hon. Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Mr. Budgen), that the points made about the enforcement of fines were probably the worst in any of our debates on Maastricht. I thought that that was a rather supercilious remark but, having said that, he went on to talk about the enforcement of fines. As I understand it, the issue raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies), my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) and some Conservative Members was how the fines were to be assessed, enforced and collected. That is surely a reasonable question to put to the Minister of State. The Labour party tabled the amendment, but we are still waiting for a response.

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman asks a serious question. I hope that I have made it clear that I believe that, for the reasons already outlined, there is no problem with the enforcement of fines. My point is quite different. Fines should be imposed sufficiently quickly for the provisions to have effect.

The right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris) is a very distinguished lawyer whom I greatly admire. He suggested that the drafting of article 171 was less clear than it should be. He acquired a great deal of expertise some years ago in debates on the Criminal Justice Bill of 1988. I venture to suggest that those of us who, from time to time, have to make submissions to the courts on some parts of that Act would be very much happier if it was as clearly drafted as the new article 171.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): As I understand it, the amendments are probing amendments, tabled by the Opposition and supported, to some estent, by some of my hon. Friends. Amendments Nos. 32 and 330 would remove article 171 from the treaty. There has been a good deal of debate about article 171. Its first paragraph contains what is to be found in the original article 171, but paragraph 2 contains new material.

The amendment would allow the present unsatisfactory position to continue whereby member states which fail to follow European Community law make their own provision for compliance and, in many cases, do nothing. That is detrimental to our national interest because, as has been said, we tend to play by the rules. The amendment would deny us the opportunity, through the Community, to ensure that other countries did the same.

It should be noted that the research staff in the Library have kindly produced a research paper which explains the current position. I quote:

"There are at present no sanctions that can be taken against a member state which fails to implement EC legislation or implements it inadequately, according to a judgment by the ECJ"—

the European Court of Justice.

"The proposal to fine member states which did not comply with an earlier judgment on the implementation of a directive or a regulation was a United Kingdom initiative which was taken up by the Intergovernmental Conference on political union in 1991. The lack of an ECJ mandate to sanction the recalcitrant member states had been seen as one of the weaknesses of the Community legal system. In joining the EC member states agree to the primacy of EC law over national law and accept the direct applicability of the Treaties and the instruments of Community law. The Treaties have created their own legal system which is an integral part of the legal systems of member states and which their courts are bound to apply. Yet there has been no punishment for failure to fulfil these obligations. Fines might encourage a more conscientious approach to implementation, although doubts have been expressed as to the implications."

This matter was considered earlier this decade in another place when my right hon. and learned. Friend the Lord Chancellor said:

"It is not tolerable that if there was a judgment against a member state that state should do nothing at all about it and nothing should happen thereafter. That situation is detrimental to the rule of law."—[*Official Report, House of Lords,* 4 July 1990; Vol. 520, c. 2090.]

It is not only lawyers in the Chamber but all hon. Members who are concerned, rightly, that the rule of law should be adhered to. Any amendment to the treaty of Rome which makes clearer and surer the obligations to abide by the rule of law must be welcomed. Article 171 of the treaty on European union which was agreed at Maastricht does exactly that. In paragraph 2 we find the advantageous clauses which we have been looking for.

In the past, it has been said that limited resources have been the reason for the Commission's failure to pursue infringements of European Community law. For example, in competition policy, there are always hundreds of cases awaiting examination. We have been told that DG4, which is the competition directorate-general, is not keen to increase its work load. The best tactic has been to press one case, issue a token fine, make a lot of fuss about it and hope that that will act as a warning to others. However, we know that it does not.

[Mr. Edward Garnier]

Under article 171, the European Court of Justice is empowered to impose unlimited fines. The imposition of unlimited fines and the threat of such fines act as a deterrent on the recalcitrant member states which, despite the original provisions of article 171, ignore Community regulations.

The new powers under article 171 will deter heel dragging as well as punish defaulters. The United Kingdom has no fears because it has always done its best to comply with regulations and directives. Articles 171 and 172 assist the national interests of the United Kingdom whereas the amendment, if passed, will not.

If we are to have a European Community—be it a political or economic association, or both—to which member states have granted powers to act in designated areas for their mutual benefit, we must also have a legal framework as the essential basis of decision making and decision application. We must have a body of law defining the powers and responsibilities of the EC institutions. The member states must also have those powers defined. We must have a body to give independent rulings on what the law is and means. Article 164 of the original treaty makes clear what are the duties and powers of the European Court of Justice. It says:

"The Court of Justice shall ensure that in the interpretation and application of this Treaty the law is observed."

Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith (Chingford): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Garnier: I trust that that is something which my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) welcomes.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: While I agree with the idea that there must be some way of sorting out the law and dealing with those who transgress and those who stick to the legal prescriptions, does my hon. Friend agree that the key to the whole argument is not so much that a system is not something to strive for, as that the European Court of Justice as it exists provides no real checks and balances on the constant extension of that power in a political sense?

Mr. Garnier: If I follow my hon. Friend's point, I think that it is answered by article 3b of the treaty.

I suggested that we must have a body of law to define the powers and responsibilities of both EC institutions and member states. We must have a body to give independent rulings on what the law is and means. The law provides the background for all EC activity. Decisions are made against that background. The law tells us what must be done, what cannot be done, and what may be done.

It is also essential to have a common interpretation of EC legislation so that it is applied in all member states equally. I suggest that the concept of order and respect for the rule of law is not foreign to the British or to members of the British Conservative party. It should be welcomed when it is found in the Maastricht treaty.

I further suggest that the legal order of the European Community derives from several sources: first, the treaties; secondly, the Community legislation; thirdly, international law; fourthly, the general principles of law; and fifthly, judicial interpretation. I shall deal with the treaties first.

The treaties as amended by subsequent treaties form the primary legislation—the constitution, if one likes—which creates the institutional structure for decision making. They also establish the limits of the powers of the structure. It is most important to the interests of the member states that those powers are limited. The Maastricht treaty especially limits the powers of the EC structure. It also contains enunciated policy and intent, for example, on the promotion of competition and free movement of goods, services, capital, labour and so on.

Community legislation is the means by which the policies in the treaties are implemented. They are mostly the regulations and directives which the Commission issues. The EC is itself a body corporate, with its own legal personality. Therefore, international law impinges upon it. The general principles of law that we are discussing are also to be applied by the European Court of Justice. The court is charged with the task of ensuring that in its interpretation and application of the treaties the law is observed.

It is with judicial interpretation that some of my hon. Friends perhaps find most difficulty. However, in Britain we are used to judicial interpretation, whereas mainland Europe has the codified system. Judicial interpretation is an important role when EC legislation in the treaties or the laws is unclear or incomplete. Judgments have to be given based on a lack of detail in some of the EC statutes. It has been seen to be filling in the gaps, thus creating law.

Community law is primarily concerned with the economic activity of member states, which is not surprising as it is an economic community. We are concerned primarily with commercial law, competition law, business law, intellectual property law and law on the free movement of goods, services, labour and capital. That law must sit side by side with national and domestic law. We have companies legislation, copyright legislation, civil torts on intellectual property and laws that prevent the stifling of free competition. The EC law and the domestic law of Britain sit most comfortably with each other, compliment each other and do not detract from each other. Business is all the better structured and organised by those two partners.

9.45 pm

Environmental law is increasingly being developed by the EC to deal with matters such as toxic waste and protection of animal species. We must have EC law to cover matters that do not respect national boundaries, such as river pollution, acid rain and so on. No domestic law passed by the House will be able to deal with international disasters of the sort created by environmental problems.

The European Court of Justice has two main functions. The first is to apply the law in certain cases, and the second is to interpret the provisions of EC law and ensure that it is consistently and uniformly applied by the national courts. It is accepted that Community competence has been extended by court judgments, about which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State indicated regret, especially in creating the single market. By ruling that certain practices were illegal, and by forcing the Commission or the Council to act in line with EC legislation, the court has played its part in forging the single market. I should have thought that that was dear to the hearts of many hon. Members' constituents and businesses practising in their constituencies.

Article 173 of the treaty is clear that the court cannot act of its own motion. English courts have that power. Our

courts can issue bench warrants and have an inherent jurisdiction. The European Court of Justice has no jurisdiction to act other than specified by treaty. Its powers are entirely codified and written down. Conservative Members should be grateful for that certainty. Cases must be referred to it, mostly by the Commission, where there has been a failure to fulfil a Community obligation, or they can be referred by member states and individuals. One can apply to it for an application for an annulment to strike down decisions of the Commission, the Council or the European Parliament and that, too, is to be found in article 173, which, as I understand it, the amendments propose to delete.

Article 173 provides the court with a power akin to our judicial review system. Where a Minister or Department overstep their powers or act ultra vires, the divisional court has the power to review that decision. Under article 173 of the treaty, the court of justice has a similar power to control the overweening power of other institutions.

Under articles 171 and 172, the European Court of Justice has unlimited power with regard to penalties. It can also review penalties imposed by the Commission. Until recalcitrant nations face peer pressure from other member states backed up by the power of unlimited fines, the less well behaved nations will not obey the rules of the treaty.

The European Court of Justice can rule on failures to act by any institution. If the EC, the bank, the Commission or the Council fail to do something that they are obliged to do, the court can act to ensure that they do that. It has a mandatory injunctive role.

The court can rule on the non-contractual liability of the EC. That is specified in this section of the treaty. The court can also receive references for preliminary rulings from national courts. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State referred to the Sunday trading case that came before the court earlier last year.

The Single European Act established an additional procedure to break the logjam of cases that were stacking up before the European Court of Justice. It has provided a mechanism of a court of first instance to deal with competition law and disputes between the EC and its staff.

One of my several complaints about the EC is that it takes too long to reach conclusions. I urge the Government, in their intergovernmental meetings and in meetings in the EC, to speed up the process of the European Court of Justice. At the moment, there is a gap of 12 to 15 months between cases being lodged and the giving of a preliminary ruling. In substantive cases, there is a gap of nearly two years. That is too long and that holds up domestic legislation or domestic cases. If anything can be done to speed up, where sensible, the processes of the European Court of Justice, so much the better.

The European Court of Justice has done a great many things and the section of the treaty that we are considering will give it additional and necessary powers that must be considered within the framework of article 3b. If any of my Conservative colleagues are concerned about the powers of the European Court of Justice—I see my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan-Smith) grinning away as he is obviously enjoying every moment of my speech—and wish to criticise the court and the way in which its powers are provided through the treaty, they should study article 3b carefully. As my right hon. Friend the Minister said, the atmosphere is now changing, and my colleagues should bear that firmly in mind.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful for the opportunity to address such an attentive and interested Committee on the vexed question of the amendment tabled to the treaty of Rome about the European Court of Justice. Members of the Committee will be excited at the prospect of discussing this matter.

I agree with the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) that it is difficult to see how the amendments in the Maastricht treaty provoked such antagonism from some hon. Members. After all, the European Court of Justice is a court and it has responsibilities similar to those enjoyed by courts in this country. It is responsible for interpreting and upholding the law.

There are obviously many improvements that I would like to see in the operation of our courts and in the operation of the law which those courts must uphold. However, that is not the same as saying that there should be no role for those courts and, in this context, no role for the European Court of Justice.

Mr. Duncan-Smith: I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman would like to give the Committee his opinion on the real problem, which is not so much that the amendments on the Maastricht treaty and all that goes with it concerning the court change very much, as the nature of the court as it exists now and post-Maastricht. Nothing has been done to change those excesses, to check them or to restructure the court.

Mr. Hoon: As ever, the hon. Gentleman makes a fair point, but the Committee is dealing specifically with the amendments on the Maastricht treaty. Those amendments should be seeking to improve the operation of the European Court of Justice and, to that extent, as we have already heard from right hon. and hon. Members, the Maastricht treaty is broadly successful.

The Minister of State made great play of the success of the British Government in upholding European Community law, but the same British Government, in the intergovernmental conference leading up to the Maastricht treaty, did most to threaten the coherence and integrity of the law applied by the European Court of Justice. By opting out of the social chapter, they have produced a new, damaging divergence of legal competence in the European Community, which the court has to try to resolve.

As a result of the British Government opting out, 11 member states will now have the opportunity of making new European law that has to be interpreted by the European Court of Justice under the protocol on social policy. It is clear that, when new law is made under the protocol, at some stage the European Court of Justice—*[Interruption.]*

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I should be most grateful if hon. Members would listen to the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Hoon). He is making an important speech.

Mr. Hoon: I am grateful, Mr. Morris.

It is clear that any directive made under the protocol on social policy will at some stage have to be interpreted by the European Court of Justice. The difficulty for the European Court of Justice having made a decision in a case in which it will have reviewed the case law of the

[Mr. Hoon]

European Community, looked at the treaty and considered the directive in question, is that it will then have to give a decision.

It is not clear—I should be grateful if the Attorney-General would consider this question—what then happens to the case law of the European Court of Justice. Having made the ruling on the interpretation of a particular directive and having taken into account previous cases and decisions and the treaty itself, that case will stand as precedent for other cases in future.

The problem is for which countries will that case be a precedent? If it is a case determined under a directive, passed under the social protocol, how will we know whether that case applies to the United Kingdom? Will it mean that in future the European Court of Justice will have to set out in the headnote of the case that some cases apply to all 12 member states and some may apply to only 11? By opting out of the social policy chapter, British citizens will be denied rights before the European Court of Justice which are enjoyed by all other European Community citizens. I should be grateful if the Attorney-General could comment on whether he feels that that breaches the basic principle of equal treatment before the law for all Community citizens. *[Interruption.]*

The Chairman: Order. The Committee is being very unfair to the hon. Member.

Mr. Hoon: Once again, I am grateful, Mr. Morris.

I hope that the Attorney-General will accept that this arrangement, with one country opting out of the ability to make law in the European Community, is unprecedented and produces a potential situation in which there is one law for United Kingdom citizens and quite a separate legal system for European Community citizens from Ireland and the continental countries. That appears to produce great uncertainty for the law and lawyers.

It will be necessary, obviously, for lawyers in the United Kingdom to advise their clients of their rights. It will not be clear whether those rights are similar to those enjoyed by other citizens in the European Community. I wonder whether the Government have given consideration to whether the European Court of Justice will have to produce separate decisions for the United Kingdom. Was that considered by the Government in the exercise of opting out of the protocol on social——

It being Ten o'clock, THE CHAIRMAN *left the Chair to report progress and ask leave to sit again.*

Committee report progress.

To sit again tomorrow.

Burnsall's, Smethwick

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Kirkhope.]*

10.2 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) *rose——*

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wonder whether it is possible for a Minister to tell the House why all the plans and arrangements that the Government made to sit——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The hon. Member knows that we are on the Adjournment. He is taking the time of the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds).

Mr. Faulds: There has been some skulduggery over the past couple of years at No. 10 Downing street. I am talking, of course, about my constituency. Burnsall's is a small electroplating factory which is run by two Irish brothers of whom I shall have something further to say.

The metal finishing industry is characterised by small factory units employing unskilled or semi-skilled workers. Because of their working conditions at the Burnsall's factory, a number of workers—30—after talks with the health and safety advice centre in Birmingham approached the GMB in March of last year. They wanted the protection that only a union could give them. Their complaints were numerous. They were denied the use of the safety-protective clothing and equipment when it was needed. They worked with acids and phosphates, but gloves were not replaced when they gave no further protection. Goggles were not provided for workers who were exposed to fumes and splashing from acids. The necessary masks were not provided in the paint-spraying areas.

When the workers justifiably sought information about the chemicals and materials that they were working with, such information was, unbelievably, withheld. It is well known that chemicals used in electroplating are highly toxic.

The majority of the workers were Punjabi women. It was they who did most of the hard physical labour, yet they were paid £20 to £30 less per week than the men for a normal working week of 40 hours. In practice the work force frequently had to work imposed overtime of up to 56 hours. When the factory was operating seven days a week the workers were required to do 65 hours. The overtime hours, long and enforced, were paid not at any overtime or premium rate but at the same miserable rate as the normal 40 hours. Workers who declined to comply were given warnings and someone who did not turn up would be denied access to the toilets the following week.

On a particular bank holiday—paid at standard rate, of course—the brothers exhibited unusual generosity by presenting each of the Asian workers with a hot cross bun: something of an oddity, these two brothers. With the concurrence of the work force, Danny Parry, the regional organiser of the GMB, wrote to the company in March last year requesting recognition. On 1 May the management received individual requests from all workers for recognition of the union. The two brothers withdrew to their office, locked themselves in for four hours and pondered their tactics. Eventually—late that Friday afternoon—they emerged, walked up to the only white

worker and told him that he would be doing overtime that Saturday. The worker protested and was summarily dismissed.

The rest of the work force—all non-white—were incensed by this, and were eager to show their solidarity. On 11 June the union balloted its members for strike action. The vote was unanimously in favour. The first action was a collective ban on all overtime on Saturday 13 June. Two days later—on the morning of Monday 15 June—two officers of the union, Danny Parry and Joe Quigley, met the management for the purpose of securing recognition and so averting the imminent strike. The management refused to discuss any of the workers' grievances. Jim O'Neil, supposedly the managing director, actually said, "We will only talk to you about health and safety when we recognise your union, and we will never recognise your union."

On the second day of the strike, 16 June, the management—if one can use such a term—sent letters to all the strikers demanding their return by Friday 19 June, or they would face dismissal. On 22 June, five health and safety inspectors, including the principal inspector, Peter Ward, and two employment medical advisory service doctors investigated conditions at the Burnsall premises. That very day, the two brothers went ahead and dismissed all those who were on strike.

The Health and Safety Executive investigation vindicated the workers' concerns and grievances, and a subsequent letter from the executive to Joe Quigley stated:

"We have decided to issue an improvement notice on the company which will require them to complete sufficient and suitable assessments on all hazardous substances used in the factory. Other measures we are requiring the company to take include the provision of adequate first-aid arrangements—in particular, the need to supply suitable eye wash facilities and a shower, the need to specify a policy with respect to the employment of pregnant women and the provision of improved arrangements for ensuring that toilet facilities are kept clean."

Having discussed the situation with Joe Quigley, I wrote to the two wayward brothers on 2 July last year a very reasonable letter—as I am sure the House would expect—suggesting that, to resolve the dispute and terminate the strike, I, the local Roman Catholic priest, Father Byrne, and the president of the Sikh temple, the gurudwara, should meet the two brothers at any time convenient to them to discuss the problem. We were concerned at the divisions and tensions the dispute could cause, and we desired to foster good relations rather than exacerbate ethnic tensions.

This was, of course, Smethwick, where sanity and harmony were restored when I won the seat in that glorious victory of March 1966, after an unhappy and pretty disreputable interregnum. The brothers were probably ignorant of this history. They do not appear to be the most intelligent of gentleman in any case. They certainly do not seem to appreciate where their own best interests lie, and they did not have the courtesy to respond to my letter, then or since—in keeping, perhaps, with the general line of their conduct.

The GMB has performed with punctilious diligence throughout this dispute in the interests of its members. It has filed 53 industrial tribunal claims against the company, 12 equal pay claims, 20 unfair dismissal claims, 20 non-payment of holiday entitlement claims and one unlawful deduction of wages claim.

As the House will know, strikers, whatever the cause of the strike, are automatically barred from unemployment benefit and income support. However, last September the Department of Social Security upheld an appeal by the GMB against the non-payment of these benefits. It reasoned that the strikers had been involved in an industrial dispute only from 15 to 19 June. From that date, when the employers had demanded their return, the workers were no longer on strike but on unauthorised leave of absence. If that unauthorised leave of absence were not justified, it would be classed as misconduct and the workers barred from benefit for 26 weeks. However, after studying submissions from the GMB and the Health and Safety Executive, the DSS adjudication officer decided that the workers were justified in refusing to return to work. Consequently, they were paid unemployment benefit backdated to 19 June.

The Conservative Governments of recent years come out of all this appallingly badly. They claimed that their numerous interventions in industrial relations legislation were intended to replace shop-floor anarchy with a harmonious, legally binding negotiating structure.

The Burnsall's strike is a prime example of the total failure of the Conservative approach. It allows industrial cowboys like the O'Neils to get away with outrageous practices. "Cowboys" is perhaps too charitable a word with which to describe the O'Neils. Cowboys show more care for their horses than the two brothers showed for their Asian staff.

I have some hope that other industrial companies in the region will show their disapproval of the conduct of Burnsall's by considering whether they should handle any products of the factory and whether they should provide any work for it until the two brothers have the simple intelligence to recognise the GMB and work with it. The denial of the simple right of workers to have the union that they have freely elected to join recognised by their employer has led to a protracted, bitter and avoidable dispute.

It is essential that the Government re-examine some of the issues raised in this case. That industrial employers such as the O'Neil brothers could have reverted to the practices prevailing at the end of the last century is absolutely unsatisfactory. This is not an exercise late at night. It really is essential that the Ministers responsible for industrial relations reconsider some of the mistakes that they have made over the last few years and put them right, for the sake of industrial harmony in this country.

10.13 pm

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I congratulate my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) on securing this debate. It is high time that the appalling treatment meted out to the workers at the Burnsall's factory at 10 Downing street in Smethwick was given an airing in this Chamber.

We have recently seen the passage of the so-called Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill through the House. On 17 November, during the Second Reading, the Secretary of State was eloquent in her concern about the rights of employees. In fact, that Bill does nothing to secure the rights of employees, and what little it does to help women, for instance, on maternity leave has been forced on the Government by the European Community.

[Dr. Lynne Jones]

When, on 17 November, I raised very briefly the issue of the Burnsall's strike, the appalling wages paid to workers, the compulsory overtime, and, of course, the denial of the right to have their trade union recognised when 26 out of the 29 workers had voted to join the trade union, the Secretary of State's response was that trade union recognition and bargaining rights were different from membership.

The Secretary of State is not really concerned about workers' rights. Her remarks are indicative of the Government's attitude. They are not concerned about the appalling wages paid to workers such as those at Burnsall's mostly women workers. That is happening throughout the country. Workers, particularly women, are being forced to accept appalling wages and even to take cuts in their wages. That will get worse with the abolition of the wages councils.

In a written reply to a question by the hon. Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) about the connection between minimum wages and employment, the Government quoted 26 references. I followed them up, to find that, of those 26 references, only 10 showed any positive correlation between minimum wages and employment. The summary of the notes from the House of Commons Library says that most of the reports were theoretical and did not give a positive response to the issue.

Week after week, the Government talk as though minimum wages are disadvantageous in terms of employment. They talk as if that were the accepted wisdom. In fact, their written reply to that questions shows that that is not the case. Sixteen of those 26 references show that there is no correlation between minimum wages set at a reasonable level in relation to the general levels of wages within the economy and employment. They are not detrimental and, in many cases, can have a positive effect on employment because of the increasing purchasing power that they bring into the market.

It is high time that the Government came clean about what is happening to employees. If they really are concerned about workers' rights, they should think again about their legislation. They should think again about introducing the right for workers who vote to be members of trade unions to have their union recognised. It is high time that No. 10 Downing street, London, took note of what is happening at No. 10 Downing street, Smethwick, learned from that experience, and acted accordingly.

10.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I am grateful to the hon. Members for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) and for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) for bringing to the attention of the House a matter that they think of important interest to their constituency.

The hon. Member for Selly Oak has a short memory when it comes to the demand for recognition by employers. To refresh her memory, when the previous Labour Government tried to impose that on industry, it led to total chaos in industrial relations—so much so that even the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service said that what they had tried to do was impracticable and unworkable. Therefore, we cannot take too seriously the hon. Lady's strictures on recognition.

However, I accept that the hon. Member for Warley, East has brought what he thinks to be an important matter to the attention of the House, and I shall attempt to set out the employment law as it applies to this case.

Our consistent policy since 1979 has been to establish and maintain a framework of law which is appropriate to the needs of a modern economy. Such a framework must strike a proper balance between the rights that it gives to employers and to employees. But it must also be a framework of law which is apt for the industrial relations practices and traditions of this country. It has also been a crucial principle of our policy that the Government should not seek to intervene in matters such as industrial disputes which are best left to the parties directly involved to resolve. We do not believe that the Government know better than Burnsall's own management how to run the affairs of the company.

Similarly, we do not seek to condemn, or to praise, the lawful actions which employers may take to protect the interests of their businesses. Where an employer acts unlawfully, however, he puts himself at risk of penalties and sanctions. Thus, an employer cannot with impunity deny his workers equal pay rights, or break health and safety requirements.

I was interested in what the hon. Member for Warley, East said about health and safety inspectors. Burnsall's was visited in June 1992, in response to a complaint. They issued an improvement notice requiring the company to undertake an assessment under the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations. They made a number of additional recommendations. A follow-up visit confirmed that the improvement notice had been complied with and work undertaken to meet the remaining recommendations. There are no continuing matters of concern to the Health and Safety Executive at Burnsall's at present.

Inspectors can require an employer to obey the law where it has been broken, and the court can punish employers who flout their health and safety responsibilities. I believe that we have a very good record in bolstering the role of the Health and Safety Executive, and a number of companies would pay tribute to the way in which the executive works to further the health and safety of workers in their companies.

Similarly, under employment law, an employee has potential remedies for constructive dismissal, and breach of contract, when an employer unilaterally alters the employee's overall terms and conditions of employment to the employee's disadvantage. It is quite wrong to assume that employees faced with such unreasonable behaviour by their employer have no option but to take industrial action. It is equally wrong to believe that the Government have to intervene before these matters can be resolved.

We believe in balloting where that is necessary to ensure that union members have a proper say in the conduct of the union to which they belong.

An industrial action ballot is necessary, for example, to ensure that members want their union to call on them to take such action. The ballot is therefore a necessary condition if a union is to have the benefit of the protection which the law can give it to call on workers to take industrial action against their employer.

The workers' relationships with a company that has offered them work on terms which they have accepted is really rather different. To argue that, because there was a ballot in favour of recognition, Burnsall's should agree to that can only be founded on the completely unacceptable

principle that recognition arrangements can properly be decided by workers alone. That cannot be correct, as it fails to take proper account of the employers' necessary freedom to decide the terms on which they will offer work.

An industrial action ballot can protect a union which wishes to organise industrial action. However, such a ballot, for such a purpose, cannot and should not afford any special protection for workers who choose——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Disgraceful.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Member says "Disgraceful." I wish that miners during that 12 months' strike had been given the chance of a ballot. It was signally denied to them, and I am grateful that the law now provides that right and that protection.

Mr. Winnick: The Minister is not answering the point. We are not dealing with the miners. Is he saying that it is entirely up to employers now to decide whether they will recognise the work force? The work force carry out a ballot with the result to which the Minister has referred. The Minister is saying, is he not, that regardless of a ballot by the work force, the decision on whether recognition will be given lies entirely with the employers? That is totally wrong.

Mr. McLoughlin: That was my point at the beginning of my speech when I explained about recognition. I said what a failure demand for recognition had turned out to be under the Government whom the hon. Member supported. It was brought in and was condemned by ACAS.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The Minister said that it would be wrong for employees, by a ballot, to decide that they should be recognised, because it was not a matter that could be decided by one party, but the hon. Gentleman is saying that it is decided by one party because, if the employer will not agree to recognition, there is no machinery in law that can secure recognition for the employee.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am not sure what the hon. Member is saying. It is a fairly interesting concept that he might be developing. Is he saying that, irrespective of the outcome of a ballot, the employers have to abide by the result of that ballot, in which they have not taken part? It is a strange idea of what a ballot should be. As we have made clear, at the end of the day, there is special protection for workers to choose. It will be the individual's choice. It will be for employees to decide whether to take industrial action against their employers.

In the case of Burnsall's, it was not unlawful for the employer to respond to the decision of the workers to take industrial action in the way he did. The workers chose to take industrial action against the firm. Industrial action is one of a number of choices which employees have when faced with what they believe to be unreasonable behaviour by their employer.

However, the law has always allowed employers the necessary freedom to respond to strikes by imposing sanctions on those who take such action. That was the case even under the legislation enacted by the previous Labour Government, which allowed employers to dismiss all those taking industrial action without risking claims of unfair dismissal from any of them. The Labour Government did not believe it right to make it unlawful.

Employees who take industrial action will know that there may be damaging financial consequences for them, since they are unlikely to receive any pay if they withdraw their labour. They should also be aware that they are putting their jobs at risk, because the employer may decide that he has no option but to dismiss them.

Indeed, our legislation confirms that all employees have the right to belong to a union, and not to be discriminated against on grounds of their union membership and activities. All employees have the right not to be dismissed for being members of an independent union and not to have other action short of dismissal taken against them to prevent or deter them from belonging to such a union. They also have statutory rights to take part in trade union activities at an appropriate time.

If these union membership rights are denied, an employee can bring a complaint to an industrial tribunal —a system giving access to legal redress which compares well with any available in other countries. The rights apply regardless of the time during which an individual has worked for the employer. Accordingly, it is misleading to suggest that our law means that Burnsall's employees are being denied the right to belong to a union.

United Kingdom law does, of course, now leave employers free to decide for themselves, taking account of the circumstances and needs of their business, whether to recognise a union for collective bargaining purposes. This is an intentional, and entirely justifiable, result of the changes that we have made to the law since 1979. The law should recognise the fact that it is the employer who offers work and the employee who undertakes to do that work in accordance with the terms offered by the employer. Setting terms and conditions through collective bargaining is a choice which employers should have, and they should be free to operate those arrrangements where they believe they are appropriate or necessary.

But no employers should find themselves in a position where they must unwillingly, accept such arrangements because of some statutory requirement. After all, the employer has offered work not to the union, but to individuals. If he does not wish to bargain with a union about the terms and conditions under which work will be done, why on earth should the law require him to do so?

Moreover, experience during the 1970s demonstrated all too vividly, and at great cost to the country's industrial relations record and reputation, just what happens when the law attempts to enable unions to force recognition on unwilling employers. It is surprising that the hon. Member for Selly Oak has forgotten that the independent Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service itself concluded that the Labour Government's statutory recognition legislation proved "unworkable". Not only was that legislation unworkable, but it was highly disruptive. The Grunwick dispute, attempts by unions such as the United Kingdom Association of Professional Engineers and the Engineers and Managers Association to use the legislation to break up freely established recognition arrangements——

Mr. Faulds: The Minister is rambling. Did he listen to a word of my speech? Is he trying to pretend that the conduct of the O'Neils was in any way satisfactory with a work force of about 30 Punjabi women who did not speak English, who had no knowledge of their rights and who had to get union recognition to protect them? Will he comment on that essential element in this case?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman thinks that I am rambling. His speech was rambling. If he does not like to listen to me setting out the position under the law, I am sorry, but I still intend to explain it. If he finds it embarrassing when I refer to the position under the previous Labour Government, I feel sorry for him. He should listen, because it is important to judge what industrial relations were like prior to 1979 and to recognise the substantial changes made by the Government, which have brought about a massive improvement in industrial relations. We will not take lectures from the Labour party about the role of trade unions because their record was lamentable.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Will not the Minister condemn the treatment of the workers by the employer?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am not in a position to know the full details and circumstances of the case. I am trying tonight to explain to the House exactly what the situation is and what the law makes available to individuals so that there is a balance between the rights of workers and employers. I regard that to be of fundamental importance.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister reject Winston Churchill's view that parity of bargaining requires that there be an organisation on both sides?

Mr. McLoughlin: There is an organisation on both sides in this case. It is up to individuals to decide whether to accept a contract of work with the company. That happens in the first instance, and then we move on to the wider question of union recognition. There is nothing to stop individuals belonging to a trade union. That does not mean that a trade union must be recognised by a company. I think that that is abundantly clear.

The hon. Member for Warley, East is rightly concerned to do what he can to resolve the problems involved. I accept that, and I accept that he has gone to great lengths to bring about a resolution of the problems and difficulties facing his constituents.

The Government must be prepared to take account of the way in which the law can affect industrial disputes and the conduct of companies such as Burnsall's. I hope I have explained why we believe that United Kingdom law contains an appropriate balance between the rights of workers and their employers, and certainly not the kind of imbalance that the hon. Member for Warley, East has claimed.

I fear that the hon. Gentleman must realise that it was the choice of Burnsall's workers to take industrial action. Just as they had freedom to make that choice, so their employer had certain freedoms to respond. Both sides were acting as free agents, and it is really not the proper role of this House to seek to probe behind their reasoning with the aim of arbitrating some kind of blame or praise for what they chose to do.

The hon. Member for Warley, East raised a number of points about health and safety. I have explained the situation regarding health and safety inspections, and I —*[Interruption.]* I think I hear the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) saying that the employer was in the wrong. As I pointed out, the health and safety orders were complied with. They were——

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-eight minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 12 March 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

The Economy

9.34 am

Dr. Lynne Jones (Birmingham, Selly Oak): I beg to move,

That this House has no confidence in the Government's management of the economy which has simultaneously created the longest recession since the 1930s, an uncontrolled balance of payments deficit and a growing public sector borrowing requirement with inflation only kept down by mass unemployment; regrets that the Government's latest solution to this is further dismantling the welfare state and turning Britain into a low-wage, low-tech economy; and therefore proposes instead to bring the country's financial and military commitments into line with its resources as a medium-sized European power, to curtail the short-termism of the financial institutions and to increase investment in manufacturing to internationally competitive levels by ensuring future policy, including that on taxation, organisation and regulation of financial institutions, exchange rates and interest rates, is dictated by the need to develop the domestic productive economy, not the financial operations of the City of London, harmonising over five years United Kingdom military spending to the European Community's average proportion of GDP, thus eventually releasing £7 billion a year and investing at least an additional £10 billion a year released from the above measures, the reversal of tax cuts to the very wealthy and from an initial and temporary increase in borrowing, in infrastructure and education and in the revitalisation and modernisation of domestic production, thereby laying the foundation for sustained economic growth and the restoration of full employment.

I shall begin with a quotation:

"The ERM is not an optional extra, an add on to be jettisoned at the first hint of trouble. It is and will remain at the very centre of our macro economic policy."

That was said by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 10 July 1992. Between then and 16 September, black Wednesday, the right hon. Gentleman strove, sought, fought and finally yielded. He yielded so fast that he did not even have time to inform his right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who on that very day wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) informing him that the Government were as committed as ever to the ERM.

Shortly afterwards, Parliament was recalled and the Prime Minister spoke then of what he considered to be the essential requirements for economic recovery: low inflation, low taxes, free trade and freedom from interference by Government. It is strange that there was no mention of exchange rates or the ERM and no mention, as there is now, about the need to do something about our manufacturing industry. We are back to the well-known monetarist formula.

Of course, those events are well known and have been well documented. They are part of the reason for the motion. The Government's economic policy is in tatters. There have been 14 years of Conservative mismanagement. At the 1987 general election we were presented with the British bulldog, the economic miracle that the Conservatives had brought upon us. That soon collapsed. Before the last election we were told that green shoots were appearing everywhere.

I am reminded of the radio programme that I listened to when I was a child. It was called "Twenty Questions" and the clues were animal, vegetable or mineral. We have had the animal and the vegetable, and we are now left with lead-weighted boots—Government inertia. The Government are transfixed, unable to move, not knowing what to do about the mess that they have brought us to. Conservative Members tell us that it is just a symbol of the worldwide recession; it is happening everywhere.

I should like to quote from an interview on "Newsnight" between the Prime Minister and Jeremy Paxman during the last general election:

"The Prime Minister: 'The principal cause of the start of the recession was the monetary policy immediately after the stock exchange crash in the late 1980s.'

"Mr. Paxman: 'You used the words "principal cause" there.'

"The Prime Minister: 'I think that was the principal cause of the difficulties, yes.'"

During that interview, perhaps by mistake, the Prime Minister let slip the real cause of the problem that he, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had a good deal to answer for.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): Perhaps the hon. Lady will recall that, immediately after the stock exchange collapse, my right hon. Friend the then Chancellor—Lord Lawson—reduced interest rates to prevent the worldwide slump that was universally expected. The then shadow Chancellor, now the Leader of the Opposition, exhorted him to reduce interest rates even further and kept on with that proposal. Does the hon. Lady think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was right or wrong? Would such a policy have made things better or worse?

Dr. Jones: In addition to reducing interest rates, other policies that the former Chancellor let rip, including major tax cuts, introduced major problems into the economy.

This country was the first to go into recession, a recession which is now the longest lasting since the 1930s. Since our membership of the ERM begun and ended, unemployment has risen twice as fast as it has in the rest of the EC.

The tragedy of all this is that, unlike the recession in the 1930s, the people most affected are our young people. In Birmingham, the unemployment rate among 18 and 19-year-olds is 33·2 per cent. The Government do not even bother to collect the unemployment rate among 16 to 17-year-olds.

In 1992, according to Dun and Bradstreet, 67,767 businesses folded. We are in a mess. I can give a list of jobs lost in the last 12 months in Birmingham: 160 jobs lost to the Carlyle Group, due to closure; 200 jobs lost to Trans-European Airways; 100 jobs lost from the Concentric Group; 100 from George Stubbings; 100 from Proton (UK); 100 from Hills Precision; 135 from Raybone Chesterman; 400 earlier last year from South Birmingham health authority, and another 400 from North Birmingham health authority, and more to come from health authorities; 124 from the BBC; 250 from Avery Guidex. Now, because of Government cuts in local government expenditure, 1,000 people are likely to lose their jobs as a result of problems in the budget of

[Dr. Jones]

Birmingham city council. Last but not least, 670 redundancies have already been announced from Leyland DAF. This is just in Birmingham alone.

Last year, we had the much-heralded autumn statement. The Chancellor put in a little bit of money here and there, but what he gave with one hand he took away with the other. There have been minor improvements in some of the indicators, but the commentators on industry talk about the recovery being fragile, very modest, pretty anaemic and variable, and say that they are wary of the talk of green shoots.

The autumn statement predicted growth of less than 1 per cent. for this year. The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) asked the Secretary of State for Employment to make a statement on the effect of the autumn statement on unemployment. At first, the right hon. Lady was evasive, but when the hon. Member pressed her, asking how many jobs would be created as a result of the autumn statement, all that she could say was that it was "hoped" that the autumn statement would protect existing jobs.

The autumn statement did nothing to create jobs. It put a little bit extra money into the car industry, because it resulted in larger car sales, but that was only a modest increase. We wait for next week's Budget to see how the Chancellor will take back the £700 million that he put into industry.

On present predictions, unemployment is expected to remain at 3 million to 3·5 million until the end of the century. Goldman Sachs says that we need an average of 2·5 per cent. growth if we are to keep unemployment at current levels. The Cambridge economic forecast talks of economic growth at a mere 1·7 per cent., and a continued decline in manufacturing.

Since 1990, our gross domestic product has fallen by 2·5 per cent. Other countries have seen the effects of the recession, but in Germany there has been growth in that period of 5·3 per cent. As I learnt in the past few days during a visit to Germany with the Select Committee on Science and Technology, its GDP is 50 per cent. bigger than ours. That of France grew by 6·1 per cent. and that of the EC as a whole by 4·5 per cent.

There is a massive deficit in British trade with Japan, despite the talking up of the odd million pound's worth of sales. There is a £900 million deficit in cars, a £2·7 billion deficit in electrical goods, a £1 billion deficit in computer equipment, a £846 million deficit in telecommunications and sound equipment and a £855 million deficit in white goods.

It seems to the Opposition, and to commentators at large, that the Government's sole economic policy is that of attracting foreign investment. During my visit to Germany, a Conservative Member asked the Economics Minister of Baden-Württemberg, which we were visiting, whether he would welcome Japanese investment in his state. He nodded his head in a declining manner, and the Conservative Member said, "Well, you don't really need it, do you?" They do not need it, but we seem to.

Many people are predicting that our manufacturing sector is now too small to produce sufficient exports to lead our economy out of recession. I have already spoken of the trade imbalance with Japan, and 55 per cent. of our new car registrations are for imports.

There has to be an alternative to the Conservative Government's stagnating policies. The motion sets out that alternative. First, there is an urgent need to look at "the short-termism of the financial institutions" and to develop policies to ensure that banks and financial institutions work with industry, as we learnt that they do in Germany. In Germany, industrial concerns retain far more of their equity. Their dividends are far lower, they reinvest in their companies, and the banks have a long-term interest. In this country, large companies find it easy to raise equity, but they seem to spend most of it on takeover bids rather than on restructuring industry and developing investment for the future.

The Government have the responsibility for devising a financial structure in which the mistakes of the market, all too evident in the past 14 years, can be minimised and a fiscal policy that encourages investment. The Engineering Employers Federation and many industrialists have commented on the fact that existing tax arrangements have an anti-investment bias. The Government reduced corporation tax, but at the same time dramatically reduced the capital allowance for manufacturing investment. One industrialist called this "supporting the casino economy".

We need to encourage a manufacturing partnership between industry and finance. Businesses should be supported as growing concerns rather than as property collateral. There need to be incentives to invest. This can be done with the banks, perhaps by offering some kind of Government support and guarantees. I hardly dare to say it, but there is also a strong argument for the creation of a national investment bank.

When we were in Germany, despite the fact that it has an image of being run by right-wing conservative Governments, I was struck by the fact that they have a socialist approach to some of the market issues. Many of the banks are stateowned. We met representatives of the bank institutions and they talked to us about their policies in partnership with industry.

The German Government support industry. The Minister of the Department of Technology to whom we spoke and his officials were anxious to ensure that we understood that there was a partnership based on market considerations. The firms concerned would usually be asked to put up money themselves in return for Government money on a one-to-one basis. We were all impressed—Government and Opposition Members—by the technological infrastructure, the relationship between firms and the support that is provided, mainly through the state.

We saw the Fraunhofer institutes, which have been set up to undertake basic research and to study technological applications. At the same time, the institutes work with industry. With some contracts, industry pays; with others, services are provided virtually free of charge to small businesses.

The House of Lords Select Committee on Science and Technology recommended that something similar should be set up in the United Kingdom—the Faraday centres. That idea has not got off the ground, because the Government are interested in encouraging such developments only if there can be funding through the existing science budget. In a recent interview, the Prime Minister made much of the fact that we now have a Cabinet Minister with responsibilities for science. It should be remembered, however, that the science budget was cut as a result of the autumn statement. The Chancellor of the

Duchy of Lancaster has advanced no strong argument in support of that budget. He has not said that the budget should be increased to set up the Faraday centres that were recommended by the House of Lords Select Committee.

We have the Link projects with universities and business, but the support for them is a mere £100 million from the Department of Trade and Industry. Even less is provided by the Ministry of Defence, which should be examining ways of diversifying out of defence research.

We saw the Steinbeis institute, which was set up with little public funding. That funding was used as a pump primer. It was offered on a non-profit-making basis. It provides technological advice and services to German industry through centres based throughout Germany.

We saw the Institute for Micro Electronics, which is doing for Germany's industry what the Japanese have done for theirs in the development of microchips. The Germans have decided to fight back and not let the Japanese take over the market. They have decided to develop their own industries. It is a pity that our Government have not adopted that approach.

During the Administration of the then right hon. Member for Finchley, now Baroness Thatcher, Britain's share of high-tech exports fell from 11·2 to 9·2 per cent. That was a reversal of the trend in the 1970s when the Labour Government adopted the sort of policies that have now been developed successfully in Germany. It is— *[Interruption.]* Conservative Members do not like the truth. They do not like to hear that the economy grew far faster under a Labour Government.

There are so many developments that the Government should be encouraging, many of which depend initially on public investment. That has been demonstrated by the Governments of Germany, Taiwan and Singapore. Indeed, Singapore leads the world in technological infrastructure. It expects to have a national grid of high-tech optical fibres very soon. Other newly industrialising countries are setting up programmes to strengthen their science base. Unfortunately, that is not happening in the United Kingdom, and we are the poorer for it. If we are to compete in the world, we must develop a partnership between the Government and industry to develop new technological projects. We must have intelligent vehicle and highway systems. We must develop information technology and biotechnology. We must provide more training.

The Government talk a great deal about their various schemes. I shall take the youth training scheme as an example. The Government put £56 a week per person into that scheme. Out of that must come the £29 or £35 that is paid to the young person who is receiving training. What sort of quality training can be obtained for that sort of input? When the redundancies were announced at Leyland DAF recently, walking down the line that day with members of the work force were two youth trainees. Their training depended on having an industry where they could get work experience. In any event, they would not have received much training from the paltry amount of money that the Government put into the scheme.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for the TECs to place people on Government schemes in industry so that they might obtain the necessary experience. The Government abolished the body that was responsible for training in the engineering industry and replaced it with a training authority, which has no statutory power to impose a compulsory training levy. The Government are thinking of abolishing the compulsory training levy that is available to the Construction Industry Training Board. That possibility is much feared by the construction industry, which wants the levy to continue. It knows that it needs good-quality, trained people.

We must ensure that people receive high-quality training that leads to proper qualifications. Again, we can learn from the countries of the Pacific rim. Taiwan is rapidly developing its education systems, including higher education. We need skills, but what is happening? Yesterday, we heard of the redundancies at Rolls-Royce. I have already mentioned Leyland DAF. Our most skilled workers are being sent down the line, and the Government sit idly by and let it happen. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, in the 22-country league table of the developed nations skilled workers, we occupy 21st place.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): The hon. Lady has referred to Rolls-Royce. One of the reasons for that company making redundancies is the significant drop in demand for military aircraft following the end of the cold war. It is proposed in the motion to release £7 billion a year from defence spending. How will that help the Rolls-Royce workers, people in my constituency and the constituents of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton), who rely on defence spending?

Dr. Jones: I thank the hon. Gentleman for reminding me of the terms of the motion, but I assure him that I am familiar with them. I shall be discussing the issue that he has raised later in my speech.

The motion represents a radical change in our economy. It would lead to a radical increase in investment in a productive economy. We propose to find the extra money by following at least three different routes, which are set out in the motion. It is right that defence cuts are proposed. The three routes include increased taxation for those who have benefited most from the Government's tax reductions. The richest 10 per cent. should pay their share. Taxing those people a little more is unlikely to have any effect on demand within the economy. In fact, money would be re-routed to those on lower incomes and would be reflationary.

We talk about an increase in borrowing. There must be an increase in the short term while we undertake the restructuring of our industry. That means changes in our defence industry.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): Is the hon. Lady aware that she has the full support of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster? During the general election he made the very same point about the need to increase borrowing.

Dr. Jones: It is now widely recognised throughout Europe that we have to spend our way out of recession. That is classic Keynsian economics, and that is what I am advocating this morning.

There has been talk about defence jobs. Since the end of 1991, 2,000 jobs have been lost at the Defence Research Agency; 400 at FMRO Portsmouth; 475 at Portland naval base, with the base to close by April 1996; 250 at RAF Chilmark; and 500 at RNAD Trecwn. The rundown of USAF Upper Heyford commences next year, with the loss of more than 1,000 jobs. More than 100 jobs are to go at Royal Ordnance, with a review pending of the total numbers employed and the number of sites. Some 10,000

[Dr. Jones]

jobs have been lost at BAe Military Aircraft; 4,000 at BAe Dynamics; 1,200 at GEC Marconi; 500 at GEC Ferranti; 1,000 at Rolls-Royce Military Engines; 600 at Westland; 2,000 at Dowty; and 700 at Smiths Industries. All those add up to more than 32,000 jobs already lost as a result of changes in defence spending.

What have the Government done about that? Absolutely nothing. They have allowed skilled workers to lost their jobs. We need those skills. We must invest in new technologies and use the skills of those whom the Government are prepared to put on the scrap heap. That is why there needs to be a restructuring of the economy. There can be defence cuts over that period—for example, we could start by cutting the £1·5 billion spent on imported equipment. That would not affect jobs in this country. The cost of each job in the defence industry is about twice the cost of jobs elsewhere.

We are prepared to face the inevitable—that we are a middle-ranking European power. We should be reducing our defence expenditure to the average in Europe; and we should be using the resources released, on a sensible strategic basis, to make the sort of investment being made by the Taiwanese Government. British Aerospace has moved to Taiwan because its Government are prepared to invest——

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Countries in the far east have been so successful because they have extremely flexible labour forces, they do not have strong trade unions and they do not have all the paraphernalia of the European social charter. Is the hon. Lady recommending that we impose on our labour force the same labour regimes that are imposed in the far east?

Dr. Jones: I thought that someone might suggest that. It is the policy being advocated by Conservative Members, who want us to reduce our standards and turn Britain into a third-world country. In fact, third-word countries are improving standards for their workers. Workers in Germany have far better conditions than those in Britain, yet their productive capacity is much higher. Conservative Members constantly talk about abolishing wages councils and minimum wages, as though those policies would be good for employment. There is no evidence that a continual decline in the standard of conditions for the work force leads to greater employment.

I tabled parliamentary questions asking the Government to justify their assertion that a minimum wage policy would lead to loss of employment. In reply, the Government cited 26 references in support of their case. I asked the Library to look into the detail of those references and it transpired that, of those 26 references, only 10 showed some positive link between minimum wages and unemployment. The remainder showed no such link; indeed, they showed the reverse.

When I studied the 10 references purported to show a link between minimum wages and unemployment, one showed that minimum wages could create jobs. There are a number of reasons for that, but they are beyond the grasp of Conservative Members. The Government's answers to my parliamentary questions clearly show that there is no basis for their assertion that minimum wages lead to higher unemployment. On the contrary, they lead to greater buying power within the market and a stimulation of the economy.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Lady comment on the recent OECD report, which pointed to higher levels of unemployment in France and suggested that there was a firm link between its national minimum wage and the rate of unemployment?

Dr. Jones: There are many other reasons why France has problems with unemployment, including perhaps the fact that it advocates policies not dissimilar to those being advocated by Conservative Members. There is a misnomer in the labelling of European Governments. The French Government purport to be socialist, yet they follow monetarist policies. The German Government purport to be conservative, yet they adopt social market economics.

Ms. Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason why France has such high unemployment is that it is still within the European exchange rate mechanism, with the high interest rates that go with that? On the point about wage levels, it was not a Labour Member or some radical, but the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) who said that if Britain signed the Maastricht treaty without agreeing to the social charter, Britain would become the sweatshop of Europe. What sort of future is there for a Britain that competes only on the basis of low-cost labour rather than skill?

Dr. Jones: I agree with my hon. Friend, who makes her point forcefully.

I have referred to the Government's failures and how we should look to the future and begin to restructure our industry. We must increase public expenditure by £10 billion a year. I hope that the Chancellor will advocate such proposals in this Budget next week, but I doubt whether he will. Indeed, he will probably reverse some of the fundamentals of economic success that the Prime Minister mentioned in September—for example, low taxation. Meanwhile, we will continue to press for greater investment.

In the short term, the Government should begin to co-operate with local authorities and halt the cuts that they are imposing on them; they are the cause of concern in many Conservative councils. I understand that the Prime Minister recently met representatives of local councils, including Lady Anson, the leader of the Association of District Councils. He told them that there needed to be a strong role for local authorities. If he wants to convince us that he really meant those words, he could start by reconsidering the budgets imposed on local authorities, which have forced many of them to shed thousands of jobs. I have already said that 1,000 jobs are to be lost in my city in addition to all the other redundancies.

There is an urgent need to invest in housing. The Institute of Housing recognises that there is an £8 billion backlog of repairs to council houses as well as a massive backlog in the private sector, where repairs and renovations are also needed. The institute estimates—and it has been supported in this by no less a person than the Duke of Edinburgh—that we need to build 100,000 homes each year to cope with demand, compared with the current figure of 30,000.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): The hon. Lady talks about raising £10 billion of public expenditure.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): He looks as though he could chip in a bob or two.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's remarks on the radio this morning; perhaps he is a convert to the capitalist system.

Will the hon. Lady explain how that £10 billion is to be raised? Surely it was the platform of raising taxes that lost Labour the last general election.

Dr. Jones: The hon. Gentleman could not have listened to what I said. I explained the source of that finance. There will be some increased taxation for those who have enjoyed the biggest handouts from the Government. I was returned at the last general election with the confidence of many people who would have paid higher taxes under a Labour Government. I am totally committed to a progressive tax system that is seen to be fair.

I am concerned that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench seem to have gone away from that principle, but it is one to which I hold. The eight people out of 10 who would have been better off under our policies would agree. They would consider that a fairer system than extending value added tax to other items, which it is widely rumoured is in the Chancellor's thinking for next week's Budget.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: When the top marginal rate of tax was reduced from 60 to 40 per cent. the total tax take from that group of income earners increased. Under the hon. Lady's system, she would have difficulty raising the kind of money that she seeks.

Dr. Jones: During that period there were increases—high inflation, increased salaries, and so on. A comparison of British tax rates shows that they are out of line with competitor countries, such as Germany, which have higher tax rates and are doing far better than Britain.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I believe that I have the statistics that the hon. Lady is fumbling around for—the proportion of the income tax take paid by those in the top band rose from 25 per cent. of the total to 29 per cent. It is not a question of the absolute amount and inflation, with which the Labour party is very familiar; the point is that the proportion rose. Can the hon. Lady explain that?

Dr. Jones: Income increased, and more people were in that tax band. There is no evidence that the economy has been successful as a result of such tax cuts. The contrary is true.

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): Conservative Members might recall, though they would probably prefer to forget—and certainly members of the Government Front Bench do—that to substantiate the argument that tax cuts would provide an incentive a man named C. M. Brown was commissioned by the Treasury to conduct a major study. It was naturally hoped that it would demonstrate the correctness of the Government's views. It did not. We heard nothing more of that study, and I suspect that no Conservative Member has ever read it.

Dr. Jones: There is much accepted wisdom on the Government Benches. Conservative Members think that something is the case, but the facts prove otherwise.

Investment is sorely needed in other parts of this country's infrastructure and would be welcomed by many industrialists. Representatives of the Confederation of British Industry in Birmingham with whom I have talked are totally opposed to the Government's plans for rail privatisation. They want a decent transport infrastructure provided through British Rail, investment, and a countrywide transport policy.

We see instead proposed projects cancelled or postponed. When will the Jubilee line be completed? When will we be allowed to build the midland metro in Birmingham, which is much needed if the council's efforts to improve the city's infrastructure are to be successful? We need a light railway. Incidentally, I would not have advocated the kind of project investment that was made in Birmingham, but those projects were supported by the council's Conservative opposition and sanctioned by the Government.

If that huge investment in the city centre is not to be wasted, it must be followed up with other infrastructure investment. Derelict land could be reclaimed. Projects would create jobs while the kind of restructuring to which I have referred was under way.

Will the Government be bold and advocate such policies to create full employment? That is the only way forward if today's appalling unemployment levels are to fall—and those high levels are all that we can look forward to under current policies.

On 16 September, because the Chancellor would not listen to reason, continued down a blind alley, refused to do what was required and what was on offer to him—a realignment of the pound within the ERM—he was willing to throw £5 billion of taxpayers' money down the drain. It was completely wasted. Let us spend £10 billion to get the economy back on its feet and to get Britain back to work.

10.16 am

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on her luck in the ballot, but I cannot congratulate her on much more. As she spoke, I kept thinking, "Come back, Sir Anthony Beaumont-Dark, all is forgiven." We heard this morning only the same old dreary socialist platitudes that we have heard time and again—gloom, doom and despondency. The hon. Lady produced some carefully prepared statements about the economy's fragile recovery. I will quote back to the hon. Lady other carefully prepared statements which give the counter point of view.

Sir Michael Angus, president of the Confederation of British Industry—the hon. Lady bragged that she talks regularly to the CBI in Birmingham—said:

"The UK economy is starting to grow again . . . the chances are that this time around, the green shoots will stay above ground."—

[Laughter.] Those are not my words, but the view of the CBI president. The Association of British Chambers of Commerce quarterly economic survey stated:

"The economy has seen an encouraging spurt in export growth which appears sustainable . . . Business confidence has surged in response to the Autumn Statement, the stability of the fourth quarter and the success of exporters."—

[Sir Fergus Montgomery]

[Laughter.] Good news is always greeted with gales of laughter from Labour, while bad news produces longer and longer faces on Labour Members.

Mr. Livingstone: It is amazing to suggest that there has been a surge of business confidence in response to the autumn statement. My constituency has the benefits of a Conservative-controlled council under a Conservative Government. Since the election, there has been a dramatic increase in unemployment in the constituency of Brent, North—which is held by a Conservative—and in the two Labour seats in the south. That unemployment is fuelled by lunatic national policies and massive privatisation and job losses by the council, to produce 25 per cent. male unemployment. If there were any green shoots, the goats have eaten them already.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: If I had realised that the hon. Gentleman was going to deliver his whole speech, I might not have let him intervene. The hon. Lady and her party are still living in the past, which is why last April Labour lost its fourth successive general election and the electorate wiped the smirk off Labour's face in a very convincing way.

Of course unemployment is a terrible problem. I was born and raised in the hungry 1920s and 1930s on Tyneside——

Mr. Livingstone: The hon. Gentleman has done very well.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: I thank the hon. Gentleman —it was mostly due to Conservative Governments. The Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) knows the area where I was born very well. There was tremendous unemployment. I was born in the constituency represented by the Opposition deputy Chief Whip, the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), and I remember as a child watching men standing aimlessly on street corners—a spectre which I have never forgotten. One of the most awful things for anyone to endure must be to be unemployed and desperately want to work; I do not want mass unemployment any more than anyone else.

Unemployment is not a problem in this country alone, although that was the message that the Opposition tried unsuccessfully to put across at the last election. They gave the impression that we were the only country in the world having problems, that everywhere else was a land of milk and honey and only Britain had massive unemployment.

If there is an easy answer, why has no one found it? The hon. Member for Selly Oak talked blithely about France, but there are more than 3 million unemployed there. The French go to the polls this month and I believe that the hon. Lady's French comrades will get a terrible hiding; according to every opinion poll, they are going to be massacred. President Mitterrand will be left in splendid isolation with a right-wing Government instead of his French comrades to support him.

Spain, Canada, Ireland, Finland and Australia all have a higher percentage of unemployment. Tomorrow the Australians will go the polls and the chances are that the Australian electors will tell their Labour Government where to go—I sincerely hope so.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East) *indicated dissent.*

Sir Fergus Montgomery: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head—we could have a bet on it. Perhaps Mr. Keating is playing the republican ticket to distract people's attention from the state of the economy in Australia. Perhaps he thinks that that will do the trick. I believe that the Australians are cleverer than that.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Has my hon. Friend read recent reports about the number of people who lost their jobs and become homeless in Germany, which at one time was the powerhouse of the European Community? Since losing their jobs and homes they have frozen to death on the German streets.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: It is a pity that my hon. Friend did not intervene on the hon. Member for Selly Oak, who was extolling the virtues of what is going on in Germany.

However, it is no consolation for the unemployed to be told that unemployment is a problem the world over. There are some bright spots. A higher proportion of the adult population is in work in the United Kingdom than in any other major European Community country. There is no panacea for unemployment, which is a terrible waste of human resources. The fact that we are paying more and more out in social security benefits is also a terrible waste. If only those people were back at work, we could cut social security payments, they would pay tax and that would help to spark the economy.

I believe that things are in place for economic recovery. Interest rates are down to 6 per cent.—the lowest since 1977 and the lowest in the European Community. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have been appealing for interest rate cuts because they are bound to help industry, small firms and the construction industry, by encouraging people to buy their homes and get things moving there. Inflation is now below 2 per cent.—the lowest since 1967.

I am amazed that the Opposition have attacked us on unemployment. We have already had quite a lot of debate about the effects of the social chapter, of which the hon. Member for Selly Oak is a great exponent. The Prime Minister was absolutely right to opt out of the social chapter of Maastricht because it would increase labour costs and make the labour market less flexible. We should remember that in 1991 Britain attracted one third of all inward investment in the European community. When the Prime Minister opted out, Mr. Delors—who is a pin-up for the Opposition but no pin-up of mine—said that it would "set a dangerous precedent, setting up one country as a paradise for Japanese investment."

An editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* about "John Major's gifted leadership"—*[Laughter]*—I am glad that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) finds that funny. The Prime Minister won the last election, against all the opinion polls and all the trends at the time. Until the last minute, the Opposition were convinced that the election was in the bag, but I could have told them differently. The reaction on doorsteps in my constituency made me certain that we would have another Conservative Government.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: In Altrincham and Sale?

Sir Fergus Montgomery: Even in Altrincham and Sale the majority can occasionally drop, but it did not do so at

the last election and it has not dropped since I became the Member of Parliament. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East and I pair with each other in the House of Commons, but I must warn him that if I hear any more of his interjections I shall have to look for another pair.

The editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* noted:

"Under John Major's gifted leadership, the UK has opted out of EC social legislation, including labour policy. The message to the world is that an investment in Britain gives access to the single market without the high labour-cost threshold imposed by the social charter."

That decision was of enormous value.

I do not dispute that the recession has been deeper and longer than anyone imagined. When I was young my parents always told me that it was important to have a profession because if one was a school teacher, an accountant or a lawyer, one had safety, but that has not happened this time; people who have not been hurt in past recessions have been hurt this time, and it has had a terrifying effect.

Many of our trading partners have also experienced economic downturns. In the year ending December 1992, industrial production fell by 3·3 per cent. in West Germany, 8·5 per cent. in Japan and 3·7 per cent. in France —but in this country it rose, albeit very narrowly, by 0·6 per cent.

The Opposition should forget some of the doom and gloom. If we had less gloom and doom from Opposition Members and if they did more to hail this country's achievements of the past few years it could do a great deal to rebuild confidence in this country. If the hon. Member for Selly Oak forces the motion to a Division, I hope that the House will overwhelmingly reject it.

10.26 am

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery). I congratulate him because he was at least honest enough to acknowledge the depth of the recession and the fact that it is deeper and has gone on longer than he and many others had expected. I congratulate him on acknowledging that unemployment is a human tragedy as, sadly, we have not often heard that view from Conservative Members. I am grateful to him for saying that.

The hon. Gentleman asked us not to refer to what he describes as "gloom, doom and despondency". Many Opposition Members have a major problem—especially since we have been told about the Prime Minister's "gifted leadership"—because we know that if we dare to comment on that "gloom, doom and despondency" we shall be attacked by the Prime Minister during Question Time for talking this country down. I have no desire to do that, as I think that confidence in this country is vital. We know that confidence is an important ingredient in economic recovery. However, we cannot allow that to cloud the issue and we must consider the subject of the motion—the Government's management of the economy. Frankly, if we are to deal with that, there is no way that we can use nice, warm phrases about success and so forth, because the Government have badly mismanaged the economy.

As Conservative Members have said, other countries are facing economic difficulties, but that does not alter the fact that measures could be taken to alleviate, or go some way towards alleviating, our problems. I and my party criticise the Government for their failure to take those measures. Although other countries face difficulties, as we do, we went into the recession long before many other countries and our recession is far deeper than that of many other countries. The blame for that must be laid at the door of the Government.

The future for our economy looks grim. Unemployment is rising. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) referred to the large number of national organisations that got into severe difficulties and have had to shed manpower, but an important additional point that the hon. Lady did not mention is that a large number of very small businesses have had to shed staff. My constituency of Bath depends on the small business community. Whatever hon. Members may think about Bath, adult male unemployment there now stands at nearly 17 per cent. I know that the figure is higher in other constituencies, but I am sure it will come as a surprise to hon. Members to be told that adult male unemployment is a problem in my constituency.

Mr. Nigel Evans: At some stage during his speech, will the hon. Gentleman point out that our interest rates are now extremely competitive, at 6 per cent., that inflation stands at 1·7 per cent. and that our exchange rate is extremely attractive, which means that our manufacturers are able to export far more? Will he also point out that in my area of the north-west there is extremely encouraging news? Last Friday, after going to the opening of terminal 2 at Manchester international airport, at a cost of £265 million, I picked up a copy of the *Manchester Evening News* and saw the headline "Good News" on the front page. The article talked about 50,000 extra jobs being created at Ringway, Manchester; 6,000 jobs in Dumplington; 1,000 jobs in Stockport; and 500 jobs in Tameside.

Mr. Foster: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. He made the point with which I began—that it is not all bad news. Some improvements are taking place. However, the hon. Gentleman fails to recognise that a successful economy is one in which we have all the things that he mentioned, including low inflation, but also low unemployment and that the Conservative Government have not brought about an economy in which both of those things happen at the same time.

As the motion points out, much of the low inflation that we have achieved has been at the expense of very high unemployment. We need a series of measures to ensure that we achieve a very much lower level of unemployment. That is what I seek. I am sure that that is what the hon. Gentleman also seeks. In this debate we ought to be considering the positive measures that could have been taken and should be taken by the Conservative party. Sadly, there is no evidence that on 16 March, Budget day, we shall hear about the sort of measures that my party believes would stimulate the economy.

Mr. Jenkin: Does the hon. Gentleman not suppose that if it were possible to create prosperity and low unemployment by spending additional money, every Government in the world would automatically increase public expenditure in order to create low unemployment? The fact is that it does not work. It was a Labour Prime Minister who said, in all candour, that the option no longer exists. When will the Opposition parties learn from

[Mr. Jenkin]

their own mistakes and realise that the way to create low unemployment is to maintain a low inflation, high incentive and low tax economy?

Mr. Foster: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. It would be helpful if he were to take the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to one side and have a quiet word in his ear in an effort to persuade him of his particular point, because both I and my party and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster believe that at the bottom of a recession there is considerable benefit to be gained from short-term borrowing to stimulate the economy.

The vast majority of people listening to the debate will be amazed to learn that the cost of a single unemployed person is estimated at about £9,200 per annum. If we could get some of those people back to work—and there are measures that could be taken to get them back to work—we should save the cost of their unemployment benefit. The economy would also gain. Those people would then be paying taxes, which would help to pay off some of the increased borrowing that would be required to stimulate job creation. The people listening to our debate cannot understand why such measures are not being taken when so much needs to be done to create jobs.

The hon. Member for Selly Oak referred to the need for further investment in housing, but she did not refer to the fact that there is a £4·3 billion backlog of repair and maintenance work to school buildings and that there is a £1·5 billion backlog of repair and maintenance work to higher education institution buildings. Furthermore, she did not refer to the importance of additional investment in other parts of the infrastructure—in British Rail and the variolus light transit schemes that are being developed in different parts of the country. There are many areas where it would be possible to invest in the economy, in order to create jobs, through initial short-term increased borrowing. In a relatively short period, that investment would generate sufficient income to pay off the debt. Those who are listening to our debate cannot understand why we do not do that.

Before the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) intervened, I was referring to small businesses. Small businesses have a vital role to play in the economy. If we look at what happened after the last recession, we find that between 1985 and 1987 the small business sector—firms employing fewer than 20 people—created 500,000 new jobs. During the same period, companies employing 20 or more people created only 20,000 new jobs. I fervently believe that we should provide much greater support for small businesses, but the Government have failed to do so.

The Conservative party claims to be the party of small businesses. The Advertising Standards Authority ought to look into that claim very carefully. The Conservatives have provided little or no support for small businesses. However, a great deal could be done for them. A reduction in the uniform business rate is vital. Support should be provided for small businesses so that they do not suffer the burden of the late payment of debt. Schemes ought to be set up whereby people from large businesses could be seconded to small businesses to provide them with help.

Mr. Jenkin: The only debate on small businesses that has been held in this Parliament was initiated by a Conservative Member of Parliament. In fact, it was initiated by me. The one thing that small business men want is a low taxation, low interest rate, low inflation rate economy. They certainly do not vote Labour in general elections.

Mr. Foster: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman is aware that I was not advocating that small businesses should vote for the Labour party at any general election. I should certainly strongly advise them not to do so. There is another party that I hope they would be willing to support. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. He is the only Member of Parliament who has raised this issue in a major debate, but I am sure that he will acknowledge that my party has frequently advocated support for small businesses. We continue to do so. We shall also continue to challenge the Chancellor of the Exchequer to introduce a wide range of measures in his forthcoming Budget statement to support small businesses.

Dr. Lynne Jones: The kind of technological infrastructure that I mentioned in my speech is of great assistance to small businesses in Germany. For instance, one small, highly innovative company that employs only seven people worked with the institutes to which I referred to develop specialised microchips and develop its market needs, which may lead to greater things. Small businesses certainly have such innovative capacity and need the support that I mentioned in my speech.

Mr. Foster: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, who is quite right. Such schemes are available in Germany; but similar schemes are available in Britain to help with research and development and such like. I am sure that she will agree that schemes such as support for products under research—SPUR—and the small firms merit award for research and technology—SMART—need a significant financial boost. Perhaps she will join me in urging the Chancellor of the Exchequer to consider imaginative ways of providing support to small businesses. One of the simplest measures that he could take would be to raise the threshold for VAT.

Mr. Nigel Evans: I am one of the nation's 3 million small business people. We warmly welcomed the uniform business rate, because at least we now know that rates will not increase by more than the rate of inflation. Too many small businesses were clobbered by left-wing Labour and Liberal Democrat authorities. Small business people want certainty about taxation, which they get under the UBR, but we do not want the social chapter, which would increase the costs of small businesses. The minimum wage, which the Labour party advocates, would increase labour costs and price people out of jobs. That is the last thing that small businesses want.

Mr. Foster: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention. Perhaps he is the first hon. Member to recognise that not just the Labour party is participating in the debate.

I am also grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making the point that small businesses like certainty in taxation. I assure him that not only small businesses but large businesses and individuals would like some certainty about taxation. The hon. Gentleman is a member of a political party which would have people believe that it has reduced taxation, but, as he knows only too well, the total taxation burden on individuals has risen significantly.

We need only to consider the issue of VAT to realise that that is true. There are three points about VAT that are well worth making. First, people pay a lot of VAT: the average family pays £1,000 a year. Secondly, British people pay much more VAT than they used to: VAT payments have increased by a staggering 178 per cent. since the Conservative party took office. The third point, which perhaps is the most worrying, is that it is undoubtedly the Conservative party's favourite tax. The hon. Gentleman spoke of certainty, so perhaps he would like to intervene again and tell us whether, after 16 March, VAT will be levied at the current level on the same range of goods and services or whether it will change and cause further uncertainty. I am happy to give way if he can answer that question.

Mr. Nigel Evans: I am not the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): Shame.

Mr. Evans: I thank my hon. Friend for that. If I were, I would tell the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) what will happen on 16 March. We have had a general election since value added tax was increased to 17.5 per cent. in which the Government won a fourth seccessive term of office and the Liberal Democrats were smashed because people had no confidence in them. The Labour party, yet again, was consigned to the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Foster: Again, I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's intervention because he linked the general election with VAT. In the election campaign, the Prime Minister made it clear that he had no intention of raising VAT. I assume from his intervention that the hon. Gentleman at least knows that VAT will not be increased.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of certainty. There is an urgent need for much more openness and transparency in the preparations for the Budget. The hon. Gentleman seems quite content to be unaware of what will be in the Budget until it is announced on 16 March, but I believe that it would be much more sensible if we adopted the example of other countries and held a more wide-ranging debate than is possible under the motion before the Budget. It would help to resolve some of the uncertainties that face small and large businesses and local councils.

Mr. Heald: On the question of tax and small business, does the hon. Gentleman agree that some of the good news that he mentioned is that corporation tax has been reduced from 52 to 33 per cent.—the lowest rate in the EC—and that seven major taxes on small business have been abolished, including inheritance tax on family businesses, which is a real bonus to the small business man? Does he agree that that is good news for Britain?

Mr. Foster: I was more than happy to admit earlier that there are some bright spots, and the hon. Gentleman has referred to one or two others, but, sadly, they do not amount to a great deal because of the decline in the small business sector. A wide range of measures, some of which I have mentioned, need to be taken if we are to provide the necessary support to small and larger businesses by investing in our infrastructure and to begin to reduce unemployment.

We cannot forget the earlier remarks that were made about unemployment. Because of the Government's mismanagement of the economy, unemployment is allegedly standing at 3 million, but if we were using the same calculation that was used only a few years ago the figure would be 4 million. There are 1 million long-term unemployed people, and far too often we have referred to statistics without emphasising that behind each one is a human being and a human problem. We should always remind ourselves of that.

There is now clear evidence about the personal and social problems that arise from long-term unemployment. I am sure that, like me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you were saddened to read the recent report by the British Medical Association, which stated that there is clear evidence that the long-term unemployed are likely to die younger than those who are in employment. That is a particularly telling point. A bilingual translator who lives near my constituency recently sent the Prime Minister a letter asking, "What can I do to get a job?" The Prime Minister replied, "You had better travel to France and seek one there." That is not good enough. Much could be done by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 16 March to reduce unemployment. I fear that there is little reason to believe that we shall hear good news or exciting ideas to stimulate the economy from a failed Chancellor of the Exchequer, but I desperately hope that we shall.

10.49 am

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I should like to pick up straight away the last point made by the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) because there can be at least some agreement between our parties. Week after week, every hon. Member is made aware through our postbags and at our advice surgeries of the raw pain of human misery caused to individuals and families by their personal experience of unemployment. However, I fear that there is less agreement on the economic policies most likely to bring about long-term, sustained growth in employment and prosperity for the people of this kingdom.

I, of course, congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on securing the debate —I am sorry that she is not in her seat at the moment—but I part company from her on the remedies that she offered. I listened closely to her speech and, in the long catalogue of slogans, I managed to discern four suggestions that I took to be her policies for economic regeneration. Prominent among them, in her speech and in the text of her motion, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) said, were cuts in British defence spending. I looked across at her colleagues around her while she made those remarks and observed the horror on the faces of those who leap up at every Defence Question Time and in every defence debate, pleading for defence contracts in their constituencies to go ahead.

Mr. Livingstone: I do not.

Mr. Lidington: At least the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) is consistent. He has stayed here, but such was the hon. Lady's advocacy that she has driven out of the Chamber the hon. Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry), who champions the European fighter aircraft, and the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton), who looks after the interests of the military dockyard in his area. There has even been a switch among the members of the Labour Front Bench so that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) can rush to telephone his local newspaper with an assurance that,

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whatever Labour's policy on defence cuts, it will not affect the Swan Hunter contract for an amphibious assault ship, which he so ardently demands in every defence debate and Defence Question Time.

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friends have left the Chamber to launch the Campaign for Full Employment. They will be right back as soon as they have done so.

Mr. Lidington: The timing has proved most convenient for them.

The second policy that I detected in the hon. Lady's speech was that, as part of the new defence policy and part of the effort to maintain employment here, Britain should stop imports of defence-related equipment. She completely ignored the likely consequences of such a move and the reprisals that would be taken against British exports of defence equipment and other goods. For the hon. Lady to protest, understandably, about redundancies at Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace and then to advocate policies of trade protection displays a misunderstanding of economics which, I am afraid, is characteristic of too many members of her party.

We then heard about the national investment bank, a resurrected ghost from the 1960s and 1970s. I am sure that the hon. Member for Brent, East will tell us that what we really need for economic recovery is for the Greater London council to be re-established. The old ghosts are coming back to haunt us. The De Loreans of the future will take heart from the speech made by the hon. Member for Selly Oak.

Finally, as one might expect, the Labour party was joined by the official spokesman for the Liberal Democrats. It was said that a little bit more borrowing would not harm us but would magically bring about the prosperity and employment which we are all seeking. A mere £10 billion was mentioned; a smidgen we were told. There was no mention of how that money was to be raised although we could perhaps increase the top rate of tax, but only a little. We heard nothing about the consequences of such an increase in borrowing, which would lead to higher interest rates. That would be more damaging to hopes of economic recovery in Britain than any other single development, especially when the recovery is beginning but it is still at an early stage.

Underlying the hon. Lady's speech was the fallacy that it lay within the gift of Governments to bring about full employment overnight. If there were a magic wand or such an easy and painless solution, every member of any party would have seized it immediately. The truth is that it does not lie within the gift of Governments. Jobs and prosperity will be provided by British companies selling high quality goods and services to customers here and abroad at a price that the customers are willing to pay. Governments can help to shape the conditions that make commercial success more likely, but they cannot do the work of businesses for them.

I wish to put the dilemmas facing policy makers in the United Kingdom in an international context. The hon. Lady referred to developments on the Pacific rim. I glimpsed them when I visited that region last summer. Without a doubt, the most important event in the world today is the industrialisation of China, especially south China and the towns along the eastern coast of the People's Republic. In Hong Kong I was told anecdotes of economic growth in Guangdong province ranging between 15 and 20 per cent. a year. Four million people in the Republic are now employed by Hong Kong companies, with manufacturing being transferred across the border to mainland China. Migration is occurring on a scale seen in western Europe in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, out of the fields, away from agriculture and into the infant manufacturing businesses of China.

What is happening is exciting and alarming. We are seeing 1 billion people, the world's largest nation, now following the path already trodden by the likes of Taiwan, Singapore and, of course, Japan. Many countries in the far east are following the path of capitalism and free enterprise which they rightly believe will lead to higher living standards for their people. It is to be welcomed, but it represents a challenge for us.

Those countries have access to very cheap labour and to green-field sites. They have virtually no regulation of business on the ground—for example, of environmental pollution—and they have the low costs associated with countries industrialising for the first time. At the same time, they have access to the latest technology which they can buy off the shelf.

The challenge for western Europe and for the United Kingdom is to adapt our economic policies to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the industrialisation of countries that have hitherto been poor and agrarian and to ensure that our economy is flexible enough to gain new markets, develop new products and find new niches in international commerce so that we keep jobs and prosperity in these islands.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am sure that my hon. Friend, like me, is a firm supporter of free trade, but does he agree that, when investigations have been carried out by the European Community into the issue of dumped bicycle imports from China and when such practices have been found to be unfair under EC regulations, we should reasonably expect an immediate implementation of an import tariff? It is a matter of concern to me that that implementation has so far been delayed.

Mr. Lidington: I am not familiar with the details of the case to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) refers. The general principle that one should strive for world trade to be as free as possible is sound. We should seek an early agreement in the general agreement on tariffs and trade talks. We should try wherever possible to open the markets of the industrialised west to goods and services produced competitively in developing countries, and in central and eastern Europe, because that helps them on the way to prosperity and provides good quality competition for our own industries.

It is right that cases in which the principles of free trade and fair trade are being undermined should be looked into. Sir Leon Brittan is responsible for international trading matters within the Community. He is a committed free trader and I am sure that he will strike the balance correctly in resolving difficult cases such as the one to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks referred.

I talked about the opportunities for Britain and the rest of Europe that arise from industrialisation in China and in the far east more generally. It is right to congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister for Trade on the successful mission that he led to the People's Republic of China last

year. It is no accident that our exports to China last year rose by one third to £430 million and that half those exports were in British machinery and in British transport equipment which we are selling to help the industrialisation of that country.

We are also marketing our expertise. I found it an interesting vignette both of the entrepreneurialism of British business and of the success of privatisation that Thames Water is now talking to a number of Chinese provincial governments about taking over their water supplies, improving the quality of the water and selling it to industrial and domestic consumers.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Making a contribution to Communist party funds.

Mr. Lidington: I am afraid that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is behind the times, as always. Thames Water is improving the quality of life for people who have had a poor and wretched existence in past decades. At the same time, Thames Water is strengthening its business, some of which will come back in the form of good profits to benefit this country.

Mr. Dobson: What is the hon. Gentleman's explanation of why Thames Water gave £50,000 to the Conservative party last year?

Mr. Lidington: I am sure that Thames Water gives money to the Conservative party because it believes in sound economic policies which encourage free enterprise to thrive and do not seek to stifle it.

There are challenges as well as opportunities in the changing international climate. Countries that we had previously written off as part of the third world are developing into industrial manufacturing powers in their own right and a new generation of computers and robots is coming into industry and into services in North America and in western Europe.

One of the reasons for the difficulties, especially in constituencies such as mine, where much employment is in service industries, has been that a long and deep recession has been accompanied by structural unemployment—a shake-out in service industries such as banks and building societies as computers have begun to do work hitherto done by human beings. To cope with those two features of life in an international economy that will get more and not less competitive as the 1990s continue, we must develop a work force and an economy that are flexible and adaptable to changes as they arise. These changes will happen whether we wish them to or not.

I have two points for my hon. Friend the Minister which I hope he will take in the spirit of constructive criticism and advice. The first concerns education. I know that my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Employment are giving much attention to vocational qualifications. From talking to college principals and to head teachers in Aylesbury and the surrounding area, I know that it is a subject about which they, too, are concerned. When I speak to local employers, I find that there is considerable misunderstanding and ignorance about what vocational qualifications mean and about what achievements are signified by a particular certificate or set of initials.

There is an urgent need for the Government, in conjunction with industry, to co-ordinate better their efforts on vocational education and training. They must ensure that students feel that they have achieved something of worth when they come out of their course with a certificate and that employers have available a certificate of quality that will be recognisable throughout industry.

Mr. Don Foster: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. I am sure that he accepts that there has been a desire for some years among hon. Members of all parties for parity of esteem between academic and vocational qualifications. The hon. Gentleman may be willing to join me in suggesting that one of the ways in which to get parity of esteem and to achieve an understanding of the importance of vocational qualifications is to integrate vocational education within the national curriculum.

Mr. Lidington: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I will consider his proposal with interest. There is certainly a case not for diluting the basic skills and knowledge that the national curriculum requires pupils to attain, but for seeing how the vocational content of some courses could be enhanced, especially at the more senior end of the age range.

The second point for my hon. Friend the Minister concerns the support given to British exporters. As he will know, I spent an enjoyable year working for our right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. I am not someone who habitually goes round knocking diplomats. They generally do a good job, to the best of their abilities, on our behalf. Incidentally, I am amused to note that, although the Foreign Office ministerial team is now staffed entirely, I think, by old Etonians, the permanent secretary is a grammar school boy who started his professional life as a teacher for the Inner London education authority.

I fee that we need to look again at the way in which our diplomatic resources and our commercial support are organised. We have too many people sitting around in embassies in Paris and Washington and in the capitals of free economies—people who spend their time writing out dinner table plans and arranging cocktail parties for visiting Members of Parliament—and too few people working in the capitals of countries such as Korea, Indonesia and some Latin American countries. Our business men need more guidance than is currently available to them on how to enter markets in such countries, where Government influence is important in determining who gets which contract. I hope that we can have a reallocation of support from the open economies of western Europe, where our businesses should be able to get an agent and get on and export by their own efforts, to the countries of the far east, Latin America and so on.

My constituency of Aylesbury has traditionally enjoyed high employment. Although unemployment in the town is still lower than either the regional or national average, there is no doubt that it has risen faster and further than previously in the past few years and is hitting people in all walks of life, including those who had not thought that their jobs might be at risk. Notwithstanding that, what local employers and, in particular, the Thames Valley chamber of commerce and industry are telling me now is in contrast to what they were saying 12 months ago. They believe that there are now unmistakable signs of a gradual economic recovery. Exporters—particularly people selling outside western Europe—are reporting a healthier order

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book. Even people from some property companies—commercial as well as domestic—say that they are receiving many more inquiries now than was the case even a couple of months ago.

What we need are economic policies to ensure that the trends continue and grow stronger. We want them to develop not into a short-lived bubble which will burst in a couple of years' time but into steady, sustainable economic growth, bringing permanent jobs and prosperity for the people of Britain. The lessons of our own history and of international experience teach us that it is a framework of low inflation, low interest rates, light regulation and low taxes which will bring about the economic conditions within which business can thrive. Those are the policies to which the Government are committed and which I am proud to support.

11 am

Mr. Bryan Gould (Dagenham): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on initiating the debate and on the terms of the motion, which represents a commendable attempt to strip away self-delusion—about our ability to survive in prosperity without making and selling things that people want to buy, about the capacity of a failing, middle-sized economy to maintain a defence burden appropriate to that of a world power and about the ability of our industry uniquely to survive and prosper without the sort of help from Government that industries in other countries take for granted.

It might be thought that the Prime Minister—if he can be assumed to speak for the Government—has at last recognised the truth of some of those points. In the interview in *The Independent*, he appeared to renounce the view held by earlier Conservative Governments that we could survive without manufacturing. We have yet to see any sign that either the Prime Minister or the Chancellor has the faintest idea what to do about it, but if they have indeed renounced that view, they have done so in the nick of time.

The decline of manufacturing is well known and I do not propose to rehearse the details of it. Suffice it to say that, as a proportion of our gross domestic product, as an employer of our labour and as a source of investment, manufacturing is in decline. That is not because British people have lost their taste for manufactured goods—far from it—it is simply that they are now supplied by the manufacturing industries of other countries. That is why, under this Government, we fell into deficit on manufactured trade for the first time in our recorded history. That is why we have a huge proportion of import penetration. That is why large parts of our manufacturing capacity have disappeared and why our economy is now narrowly and dangerously based. That is why we are encumbered with a tremendous balance of payments deficit, even in the depths of recession, which must be a major inhibitor to any Government intent on taking us out of recession.

Notwithstanding the temptation to concentrate on recent developments, such as the exchange rate mechanism, it would be a mistake to assume that we have got ourselves into this parlous plight as a consequence of mistakes made in detail and in the short term by the present Government. Those mistakes are there—they are legion and they are damaging—but I am sorry to say that our decline as a world economy goes back a long way further even than the present Government. I believe that we pay the price today—this is not a new point, but almost a commonplace—for an excess of short-termism in our attitude to economic policy.

I want to explore briefly where that short-termism comes from—why it is now so deeply entrenched in our national psyche and has become a matter of cultural attitude as well as economic policy making. One of the first elements in the puzzle is to be found in the long-running conflict between bankers and politicians or democrats as to who should control the economy. As the country which virtually invented banking in its modern form, we have always had a greater propensity than most to listen to the bankers. We have always been more willing to hand over to the bankers control over central aspects of the economy such as the currency. The bankers' cry is always that if the currency is left to politicians, they will debauch it. They say that, in the interests of stability, they must retain control of the currency.

Whenever that argument has prevailed, it has led to the same outcome. One of its earliest manifestations arose in the immediate aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, with the Select Committee on gold bullion. The domination of the argument by the bankers on that occasion led directly to social upheaval and the Peterloo massacre. We caved in to the bankers again in the middle of that century when we gave them a virtual monopoly over the creation of credit. The picture remained unchanged in the present century. Winston Churchill said that he would rather see industry more content and finance less proud, but he nevetheless committed us to the gold standard. The depression of the 1920s and 1930s was the consequence. The same dominance of the bankers has produced two damaging recessions in the past decade.

That major factor is constantly at work, but in our own experience it has been compounded by a peculiarly British phenomenon. As the world's most successful industrial economy, at some point in the 19th century we became an asset-rich economy. We became preoccupied with our assets and created great armed forces to roam the world to give them physical protection. The impact on our economy was even greater. We ceased to concern ourselves greatly with making and selling things that people on free markets wished to buy because we had protected markets and cheap sources of raw material and food.

We became an economy fixated on assets. In the City of London, we created a great worldwide marketplace where those assets could be traded. The value, and stability in the value, of those assets was the preoccupation of our economic policy makers and it still is today. It is the last hangover of the imperial mentality. Without even being aware of it, we still run our economy as though it were the interests of those who are already well off which matter rather than the interests of those who may wish to invest and create wealth for the future.

More recently, we made the mistake of misreading our own economic history. In the Conservative Government of the former right hon. Member for Finchley, it was concluded that if we wished to rebuild the golden days of the 19th century, when we were the world's industrial leader, we should reproduce the circumstances in which that had been the case. Indeed, we heard echoes of that from the Conservative Benches even this morning. Most

particularly, it was concluded from that period that Britain was great because entrepreneurs did their own thing, freed from the constraints of government. We were the pioneers: our merchant adventurers and entrepreneurs went out and did things, and no doubt those things were very well done.

Other countries, however, seeing that we had got ahead of them, drew a very different lesson about what was required of governments in order to make up the gap. They realised that to close that gap and eventually to overtake, they needed intervention by government and a partnership of government and industry if they were to make proper, directed and rapid progress instead of the fragmented, stop-start progress which had served us so very well in our pioneering phase. Those countries rapidly learned the way to close the gap and they duly performed much better than we did. We, poor simple naive souls that we are, looking at our history drew exactly the wrong lesson when we discovered that we had a gap to make up. We thought that the way to make up the gap was to take government out of the picture. We now wonder why the gap continues to widen when we so mainifestly failed to learn the lesson from other more successful economies.

Mr. Wolfson: The hon. Gentleman was focusing on our not learning lessons which he argued that other countries had learnt in terms of the need for Government intervention. How does he account for the fact that during periods of socialist Governments in this country since the war—which, mercifully, have been relatively short—we were still subject to stop-go policies and did not make effective long-term progress?

Mr. Gould: I will come to the role of the Labour party and of Labour Governments in a moment, but it is worth observing mildly that under Labour Governments growth rates have been rather higher than under Conservative Governments. That is particularly true of the last Conservative Government compared with the Labour Government who preceded them.

I wish now to consider another modern phenomenon —the body blow delivered to Keynesian economics by the oil price shock in the early 1970s. That knocked the stuffing out of many economists on the left. They then began to say things like, "You can't spend your way out of recession"—as though there were any other way of getting out of a recession. They began to say, "We are all monetarists now." Indeed, under the Labour Government with Denis Healey as Chancellor, the monthly figure of sterling M3—do hon. Members remember that?—was the arbiter of Government economic policy from week to week. Sterling M3 was headline news. If it did not perform as expected, the Chancellor quailed and had to change his policy. Does anyone know what the sterling M3 figure is today? Is it even recorded? I very much doubt it. That is an example of how intellectual fashion can so easily influence even Members of Parliament and so easily set us on the wrong track.

With the revival of what had been thought to be long-dead doctrines of classical economics which we happened to call monetarist, we became convinced that the only thing that the Government could do through economic policy was to establish conditions of monetary stability. Stability was all that mattered. The idea was that if we could choose the level for the rate of inflation or the rise in prices, we might as well choose nil because it made no difference. We might as well have nil inflation and once everyone was accustomed to that, away we would go and the economy would prosper.

As a consequence of our experience over the past 15 years or more, we know that that was nonsense. However, we then took that argument a little further. By that time, even we—the Government and the Opposition—had lost confidence to such an extent in our own prescriptions for the economy—although, of course, we stuck absolutely rigidly to our prejudices—that we were persuaded that they were not actually producing terribly good results. We had lost so much confidence that we thought that the only solution would be to hand over all responsibility for running those policies to someone else. That was the whole purpose of contracting out our economic policy to the Bundesbank by committing ourselves to the exchange rate mechanism. I was not altogether surprised that that step was taken by a Conservative Government, because capital had largely lost any allegiance that it felt to the national economy. In terms of its allegiance, it followed capital itself: it had become an international actor in the economy.

As a consequence, the loyalty of the right quite naturally passed from the British Government to a European or even wider governmental arrangement. I was somewhat surprised, however, that the Labour party endorsed that step. It seemed to me to be absolutely evident that if one simply decreed that one's exchange rate was worth a certain amount and then made the situation worse by decreeing that it was worth more than anyone thought it was worth, one would immediately burden industry with the fact that one was penalising its production and subsidising everyone else's production.

I always think that it is remarkable that I, as a left-wing politician, should be so aware of the importance of price in the market, but there we are—that is the fact. If we insist on pricing our goods out of the market, we cannot be surprised if people do not buy them either in our own markets or internationally.

What is more, as a result of the initial mistake and the burden placed on our industry, a gap develops between what we say that the currency is worth and what everyone knows it to be worth, so we have to try to make up the gap by raising interest rates. To persuade people to hold our overvalued currency, we have to assure the banking fraternity that we are serious, so we start to cut public spending, just as Ramsey MacDonald was persuaded by Montagu Norman to cut unemployment benefit in 1931. It is exactly the same phenomenon.

In the end, such measures begin to weaken the economy. The debilitated economy simply cannot perform up to the level that we have decreed that it should match. The gap between what we say that the currency is worth and the level at which industry is capable of performing becomes wider and wider until eventually it cannot be sustained. That is what happened on 16 September. It was all perfectly predictable. Yet the Government and the Opposition are still committed to exactly the same policy —only this time there is to be no escape. The ERM could at least be allowed to fail painfully and ignominiously, but a single currency and economic and monetary union will allow no such escape.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): The hon. Gentleman's speech is a tribute to the fact that occasionally leading politicians should spend time in exile so that they can

[Mr. David Nicholson]

criticise conventional wisdom, but does he agree that his criticism of the ERM was aimed not so much at the ERM in principle as at the level at which this country joined it? Will he also comment on the fact that another supposedly left-wing party—the French Socialist party, which is at present in government and facing elections—is following the very policies that the hon. Gentleman has criticised and apparently crucifying the French economy to low growth, in contrast with the policies of high growth followed by its predecessors?

Mr. Gould: I have been known on occasion to hope that my Front-Bench colleagues, who constantly invoke the example of our socialist colleagues in Europe as a reason for supporting them and their support for economic and monetary union, might observe what that has meant and what it is likely to mean for a French socialist Government and even perhaps for a Spanish socialist Government. The hon. Gentleman makes a valid point. My speech is not intended to be about Europe—it is about economic policy—but, of course, the initial mistake in the ERM was the parity that was chosen. There were at least two further mistakes, one of which was that the obligations were never symmetrical: all the burdens fell on the weaker economies, which had difficulty keeping their currencies in line with the appreciating deutschmark and felt compelled to deflate their economies in a vain attempt to keep pace.

It is no accident that western Europe is the world's unemployment black spot. It is because a monetary policy that may or may not have been suited to the German economy at a particular time has now become the norm for most of western Europe. The second great mistake about the ERM was that, instead of being a perfectly sensible attempt to stabilise exchange rates and to iron out the inevitable volatility of the markets, it became locked in concrete because it became the essential precondition and the bridge that had to be crossed to reach a single currency, so it could not be allowed to be changed in any way.

I return to my thesis, which is that our commitment to the ERM and to a single currency are simply modern-day manifestations of a long-standing and now endemic preoccupation with the short term and with the value of assets, at the expense of the longer-term interests of those who wish to invest in our economy to create wealth for the future. Some people say that I am wrong to maintain that matters such as exchange rates and interest rates are of any importance—we are told that they are merely technical—but an economy that is preoccupied with assets and the short term is one which always has as its objective the holding of the exchange rate at the highest possible level: as its first port of call in policy terms, it will always push up interest rates because if the exchange rate is always held at the highest level, it will maintain the value of existing wealth, at least in principle. In the long term, of course, it cannot work: indeed, it destroys wealth. Politicians are especially susceptible to such beliefs. If the exchange rate is overvalued for a time, we all enjoy a higher living standard than that to which we are entitled, at least for the time being, but the long-term consequences are damning and an economy that is run on that basis will see its productive capacity destroyed.

The same can be said about interest rates: show me an economy with high interest rates and I will show you an economy that is interested in the well-being of those who have money to lend now—assets already—rather than in those who wish to borrow to create wealth for the future. These are important matters and when they have been endemic and entrenched for a century or more, it is futile to pretend that they are just short-term, technical problems.

In terms of my hon. Friend's excellent motion, how can we escape from this long-standing bias in British economic policy making? First, we must re-establish macro-economic policy—an unlovely phrase—as a real factor in managing our economy. We now know that it is not enough for a Government just to set the monetary conditions—even if they knew how to do it, which they manifestly do not: they cannot even decide what definition of money they want to apply, let alone the mechanisms by which they can hold it stable. Even if they could do that, it would still not be enough, because macro-economic policies—that is, demand management, the level of public spending, the management of the exchange rate and the setting of interest rates—all have a direct and potent impact on the real economy and should be judged in the light of the condition of the real economy from one week or month to the next.

Macro-economic policy should be a true Government responsibility which cannot be shuffled off or ignored. If it is ignored, we all suffer. The Government must intervene in these matters. They must have a policy—and so must the Opposition if we want to be taken seriously. We should not just say the excellent things that we do say about long-term investment and training; we should put them in a context in which the macro-economic performance of the economy gives them a chance to work. On the Labour side—I have little hope of the Government side—that means that we should recognise that the projected level of the public sector borrowing requirement at any moment is not just a fixed element but a matter over which we have some control. If we do not want to borrow or impose taxes to finance it, why should we not—in circumstances that will not last for long—say that the public sector might have the possibility to create just a little credit for the purposes of investing, since the private sector creates such vast volumes of credit for the purposes of consumption and importing? No one dares to think of that because people are terrified of being told that it means printing money. I do not care what it is called. We may call it monetising the debt, or underfunding, or whatever. It may not be appropriate for long, but it is appropriate now.

Within a short time, we may find that there is so much money sloshing around that we shall have to look again at credit controls. People do not like the idea of such controls, but that is the basis on which the monetary policy that was so admired for so long in countries such as Germany has been run. Let us use economic policy intelligently and positively to meet the requirements of an economy that performs well. By that I mean an economy that uses all its resources, secures a reasonable rate of growth and achieves equilibrium in its external dealings. That is all that we want and technically it is not all that difficult to achieve.

The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) spoke affectingly about his childhood in the 1930s. His speech could well have been delivered in the 1930s. He said that there was nothing to be done, that there was no panacea, that unemployment was world wide, that it was too difficult to grapple with and that we had to live with it. That is exactly what was said in the 1930s. We

now know, or should know, that it was possible to do something and that something was done. And it could still be done. In the course of setting the right economic context, we could make a real attack on short-termism. Why not change competition law to choke off the mania for mergers and takeovers which has every half-decent business man looking over his shoulder to see where a bid is coming from? Why not change the accounting conventions which presently provide that any company mad enough to spend money on training or on research and development simply suffers a cash flow problem which makes it more vulnerable to a takeover, rather than producing an asset on its balance sheet?

We should look at the role of pension funds, which are the most important sources of industrial investment in Britian and are likely to become more important. We should cast at least some light on who decides where that money goes. In respect of our second most important asset, our pension rights, can any hon. Member say who made the decision about where our money should be invested? We do not know, but we should, because that would give us a chance to make sure that it was used in the proper interests of the British economy.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak said, why not try to develop a system of industrial banking such as that which has served the Germans so well? If the private banking sector will not do it, what option is there but for the public sector to do it? That is hardly a frightening precedent when one looks at the degree of state ownership of banks among our European partners.

Above all, the objective of economic policy must be full employment. It is not beyond our capacity and it is not technically difficult. It is a matter of understanding what is the true role of economic policy. Full employment would not only be the most potent of all instruments of social justice and redistribution of wealth that a Labour Government could bring about; it would also be, even for a Conservative Government, the way to secure some claim to economic success and efficiency.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak for giving us the opportunity to make those points. I urge not just the Government but the Opposition to restore full employment to its proper place as the central aim of economic policy.

11.38 am

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): The Labour party is so serious in its denunciation of the Government's management of the economy and of its ability to improve on that performance, and in the message that it is putting forward this morning, that it has never managed to field more than six hon. Members on the Opposition Benches throughout the debate, and that has included the statutory Whip or Front-Bench spokesman. That is the background against which we must regard some of the remarks that have been made in the debate.

It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould). It was almost an aesthetically historical pleasure to listen to the hon. Gentleman, because his was the voice of completely unreconstructed socialism, of someone who, perhaps by deliberate choice, has decided to ignore the history and practices of the modern world and all the advances in modern economic theory. He speaks a wonderful language of monetising deficits and credit controls and setting up industrial banks. What I particularly savoured was the view of capitalism as a conspiracy of international bankers. Such phrases have a certain historical resonance to them and it is a delight to come to the House of Commons on a Friday and still hear people using that language, apparently entirely seriously. The hon. Member for Dagenham is joining the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) in the museum of Labour party history.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Did not the hon Gentleman notice, during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), the agreement on a number of issues that he raised that was shown by the nodding of heads by Members on the Government Benches?—*[Laughter.]*

Mr. Davies: If the hon. Lady wishes any guidance from my hon. Friends on that comment, that spontaneous reaction has given it to her. I did not want to ignore the hon. Lady in my introductory remarks. Far from it: I was about to congratulate her on having won the ballot—something which I have never achieved, and of which I am somewhat envious—and on having made a lucid, good-humoured speech in which she gave way to many interventions with great charm and courtesy. I also congratulate her on having produced a remarkable and impressive compendium of political cliches. I have not heard quite such a good one for a long time, and I collect that political genre.

Both the hon. Lady's speech and that of the hon. Member for Dagenham reflect a fundamental fact and an interesting political phenomenon, and that is the modern Labour party's great aversion, in contrast to its predecessor in the first half of the century, to anything that looks remotely like a new idea. Instead, the House hears a regurgitation of all that we have heard not merely in the five or six years that I have been a Member of Parliament but over the past 60, 70 or 80 years. I dare say, Mr. Lofthouse, that the Conservative party can take some comfort from——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will take note of the fact that, while we are all getting somewhat intoxicated by Maastricht, I am sitting in the Speaker's Chair today, because we are not in Committee.

Mr. Davies: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am afraid that this is becoming something of an occupational disease, which might be called Maastrichtitis. I have noticed in the past few days that a number of my colleagues on boths sides of the House have made the same mistake. That is not an excuse for my making it today, so I apologise. I should have made an effort to avoid that trap into which it is so easy to fall in these difficult times.

We can take some comfort from the confirmation of the essential intellectual bankruptcy of the Labour party, which has been demonstrated, in the nicest and most enjoyable way, by those Labour Members who have taken part in the debate.

It would be common ground between all of us that our great national problem in the past 100 years has been, for most of that time, the failure of our economic performance to match that of the world leaders. I say "for most of that time" because in one decade—the 1980s—we outmatched the economic performance of the rest of the world, with the continuing exception of Japan. During that decade, for

[Mr. Davies]

the first time this century, our share of the international trade stabilised, our record for growth in productivity was one of the best in the world, and was second best to Spain in Europe, and our growth in real disposable income was higher than that of any other country in Europe, both in and outside the Community. That is a remarkable and impressive record.

Ms Abbott: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the 1980s was a decade that saw the rapid contraction of our manufacturing base and the increasing prevalence of Tory Members to say that manufacturing did not matter? They said that it did not matter how one earned the money, whether it was by selling goods or financial services. Is the hon. Gentleman one of the sinners who now repenteth, and is he acknowledging that that lack of emphasis on the importance of maintaining our manufacturing base was one of the big mistakes of the 1980s?

Mr. Davies: The hon. Lady is factually incorrect. Manufacturing output increased in that decade. The output of the economy as a whole increased at an impressive rate, so we cannot speak of the 1980s as a decade that saw a decline in manufacturing. Furthermore, for a number of methodical and definitional reasons—*[Interruption.]* I see that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) thinks that that is funny, but he will have to think through these issues if he is ever to get past the superficial political slogans in which the Labour party likes to deal.

Let me give a specific example. Manufacturing output is calculated as the sum of the turnovers of businesses that are classified as being manufacturing businesses. It is a favourable, and inevitable, characteristic of modern industry that it tends increasingly to specialise in the niches in which it can add real value and to sub-contract those functions that it does not believe are essential to that major purpose. As a result, modern manufacturing businesses —this is true throughout the developed world—tend to sub-contract all kinds of high-tech services such as computer and engineering services, lesser-tech services such as maintenance and repair of equipment, and non-tech or low-tech services such as catering, which might have been done in-house previously. As a result, although the activity of manufacturing businesses might be developing at a high rate, that might not be reflected in the relative share in those statistics of manufacturing output and it might appear that manufacturing is declining as a proportion of total output, purely by the fault of the statistical phenomenon.

I notice that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, who made light of my suggestion that one should look at the methodological background to statements about the share of manufacturing output in total output and other similar economic statements, now appears to be satisfied by my explanation and is generously nodding his head. I hope that I can take a little comfort from that.

Ms Abbott *rose*——

Mr. Davies: I have not ignored the rest of the hon. Lady's comments. As for suggesting that manufacturing is less important than other economic activities, I have never adopted such a view and I cannot see the sense of it. As far as I know, such a view has never been put forward on behalf of the Government whom I have the honour to support.

Ms. Abbott: I know that the hon. Gentleman is a distinguished banker and I am a mere Hackney housewife and mother, but when he says that the problems of British manufacturing are purely definitional, all that I can say is this. In the part of west London in which I was born, and with which I am familiar—the great industrial estates going out to the M4—whereas when I was a child there was a whole host of manufacturing and light industry firms there, all that one will find now is warehousing and retail. The problems of those firms in London and the south-east have been not definitional but actual.

Mr. Davies: In the rolling fields of Lincolnshire, an area which I have the pleasure to represent in part, before the war—the time which the hon. Lady was speaking of, and no doubt remembers in great detail—agriculture was almost the only industry. Now we have high-tech businesses. There are electronic businesses, specialist printing businesses and manufacturing businesses of all types, including engineering businesses. If the west of London is an area which manufacturing industry has tended to withdraw from, I am glad to say that Lincolnshire is one of the many areas where it is now thriving.

Mr. Gould: Given the hon. Gentleman's enconium of praise to the success of manufacturing during the 1980s, can he recall the precise date—I cannot, but it was during that decade—when this country's trade manufacturers went into the red for the first time ever? If he can tell us the date, perhaps he will go on to tell us how large the deficit is now.

Mr. Davies: I recall that it was the date when North sea oil became a major factor in our economy. Naturally that displaced the oil that we had previously been importing and brought about a mathematically inevitable rebalancing of the balance of payments.

Mr. Gould: How "mathematically inevitable" has been the balance of payments deficit over the past few years? I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that at times it has been greater as a proportion of our gross domestic product than that which has ever been sustained by any advanced industrial country in modern times.

Mr. Davies: It is clear that the hon. Gentleman is unfamiliar with the level of our current account deficit. This year, it is likely to be about £10 billion or £12 billion, which is about 2 per cent. of our GDP. That is extremely small by the standards of imbalances, surpluses or deficits in current accounts throughout the world. It is tiny in relation to current account deficit levels that we suffered during the period when, to the great misfortune of the United Kingdom, the Labour party was in power in the 1970s.

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: I shall not keep on giving way. However, I have not given way before to the hon. Gentleman and, as he is one of the few Labour Members who care sufficiently about this subject to bother to turn up for the debate—it would seem from its rhetoric that the Labour party would

like to think that in this instance it has a major contribution to make to our nation—I shall give way to him.

Dr. Berry: I am grateful that the hon. Gentleman has given way because he is clearly concerned that we should displace rhetoric for fact. He has obviously been doing that! Will he tell the House the last occasion when, in the midst of a recession, we had a current account deficit of the magnitude that he has described?

Mr. Davies: In the 1970s, is the answer. We had a continuing current account deficit and we were in almost permanent recession during the period when the Labour party was last in government.

Dr. Berry: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Davies: No, I shall not give way. I may give way at a later stage, but I must make some progress.

Dr. Berry: One more time.

Mr. Davies: No. I must continue. I do not think anyone could criticise me for not having given way. What is more, I said to the hon. Gentleman that, though I would give way to him, I would not continue to give way after his intervention. I must return to my argument and not take any more of the time of the House than it would wish me to take.

In the 1980s, for the first time, we escaped from the continuing relative decline of our economy over the previous decades of the century. That was because we had, for the first time since the war, a Government who were prepared to identify and to address with considerable courage and consistency the great weaknesses of our economy.

There was the industrial relations issue. We all know what a terrible incubus that was to us during the 1960s and 1970s. We all know that we now have one of the better industrial relations records in the world instead of far and away the worst among OECD countries. That was an immense achievement in a vital area of the economy.

There was a failure of entrepreneurship in the United Kingdom in relation to the more dynamic economies of France, Germany and Japan, for example. That issue was addressed by the programme of tax reform and deregulation which was introduced in the 1980s, or when the Conservative Government came to power in 1979, and which is still continuing. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister will understand that it has never been more urgent to maintain the momentum of such an extremely important reform of the economy. The results are there to be seen.

During the 1980s, more than 1 million more businesses were created than the number that disappeared. Even last year, at a time of international recession, and a painful one, 400,000 businesses were created. That should give us some comfort. It should make us determined to continue to create the conditions in which people innovate, take risks, invest in the long term and generate the employment and prosperity that our nation will require in future.

The Government tackled another area of the economy where the records of Governments of both parties had been pretty lamentable. We were able to make a substantial change in the 1980s and establish a clear framework for monetary policy. We were able to get away from the debilitating cycle of devaluation that the hon. Member for Dagenham liked so much. It was one of inflation followed by foreign exchange crisis, retrenchment, recession, inflation and further devaluation. I refer to the miserable history of stop-go that characterised the years between 1945 and 1979.

Thereafter, we had the medium-term financial strategy, with its explicit commitment to certain monetary targets. That worked well for much of the 1980s. The framework over most of the past three years has centred on our membership of the exchange rate mechanism. There can be no doubt that our commitment to the medium-term financial strategy and the ERM brought about the reduction in our inflation rate that was so striking in the 1980s, and it has been striking again in the past two years.

We know that one of the great shortcomings or handicaps of the British economy in relation to our competitors—France, Germany, Japan and the United States—has been the constantly high levels of inflation that we have suffered over the decades. It has increased uncertainty, which has undermined investment and confidence in the economy.

Mr. Jenkin: We successfully reduced the rate of inflation in the early 1980s outside the ERM. The Chancellor of the Exchequer at the time, now Lord Howe, used to make speeches about how undesirable it would be for Britain to be in the ERM.

Mr. Davies: With respect to my hon. Friend, whose interventions I always listen to with great attention, there is a certain amount of unreality about his observation. The ERM did not exist when Lord Howe, as he now is, was Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Mr. Gould: Of course it did.

Mr. Davies: I think that there may be confusion between the European monetary system and the ERM, which was developed subsequently. The ERM has delivered the low levels of inflation from which we now benefit. The level now is at an historic low. We should recognise that fact.

A great theme has been notably absent from the debate so far. It would be wrong should it continue to be absent. I refer to the great theme of monetary policy of the official Opposition. We know the monetary policy of individual members of the Labour party, including the hon. Member for Dagenham—print money, high inflation and so on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but the points that he is making are not really related to the motion. I should appreciate it if he would direct his remarks to the motion.

Mr. Davies: I hope that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will agree that monetary policy is a central element of economic policy. Indeed, in many ways it is the determining framework of economic policy. If we are to debate the views of the Opposition on the effectiveness of the Government's management of the British economy, we should at least know what they are proposing for monetary policy. It is clear that we do not know their view on the conduct of monetary policy. They supported Britain's membership of the ERM, but, at the same time, they called for even greater falls in interest rates which would have been inconsistent with our continued membership.

[Mr. Davies]

Since Britain left the ERM last September, we have enjoyed great falls in interest rates and considerable devaluation. The Opposition still have not told us whether they approve of that. If they believe that those falls in interest rates and considerable devaluation are good for the economy, it is less than frank—indeed, it is quite churlish—of them not to congratulate the Government on having done something positive for the economy. If, however, they believe that they are bad for the economy, they should frankly advocate putting up interest rates and paying the price of a higher exchange rate.

The uncharacteristic taciturnity of Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen is a matter of national importance which should be investigated during this debate. Even if you do not want me to continue with this theme for much longer, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and I will not do so—I must just say that during our debate we must establish quite clearly that there has been the most monumental lack of frankness from the Opposition on such an important issue of national policy. If the Opposition have the slightest aspiration to be taken seriously as an Opposition, let alone as an alternative Government, they owe it to us to say, here and now, what their view is on this important matter.

12.2 pm

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): I am delighted that we have the opportunity to debate the motion tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones). Almost all the debates on the economy in this place broadly reflect the Government's view, with the Opposition making points of objection. This is the first time that the left of the Labour party has been able to table a motion that constructs a serious and coherent alternative to the Government's policies.

Part of the weakness of the Labour party in establishing its own economic policy has been that it has not been able to create a coherent total alternative. Indeed, far too often it has agreed with the Government, so that when the Government's policy falls apart the Labour party has to take its share of the blame. For example, it dragged along in the wake of the Government's decision to join the ERM at a grossly inflated rate. The motion provides a coherent alternative and the basis for what has already been an interesting debate. It will become considerably more interesting when we hear from the Government and from Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen. There are divisions within the Labour party, but it is also not outwith public knowledge that the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology is a true believer. It will be interesting to see how he squares the circle of what he now has to explain away.

I want to make my position absolutely plain. The single, most important act at the present time must be to scale down the absolutely devastating and deadening level of military spending, which, year after year, decade after decade, has systematically had such a damaging effect on the economy. That is why I am glad that that is spelt out in my hon. Friend's motion. There is a great deal of confusion about Labour party policy on that matter. A few weeks ago, when the Government announced the reversal of some of the very limited reductions in military spending, I was shocked to hear one Labour Member after another complaining that the reversals were not enough and that the Government should have introduced them earlier. The reality is that every year since 1989 the Labour party conference has voted for a specific resolution—it is reiterated in the motion—to reduce the level of military spending in Britain to the European average.

I fail to understand why a nation that is now very much in the lower-middle ranks of European nations should bear a disproportionate burden of military spending. The figures are quite stunning. They come from a neutral and eminently respected source, the Institute of Strategic Studies. That is not in any sense a left-wing body; indeed, it is a right-wing military think-tank which produces comparable statistics and irons out the inconsistencies and the deviousness in many of the figures published by the Government, which give untrue comparisons. The institute's figures are always a couple of years behind because of the length of time it takes to carry out the analysis, but they show that in 1990 the United Kingdom was still devoting 3·7 per cent. of GDP to military spending compared with 2·8 per cent. in both France and the Netherlands, 2·2 per cent. in Germany, 1·8 per cent. in Italy and 1·6 per cent. in Belgium. If we simply said that Britain's commitment to the military security of Europe would be no more and no less than the European average, large sums would be released. No one is suggesting that they could be released in the first year, but over the lifetime of a Government we would phase down our military spending and divert the resources released to more productive sectors of the economy, thereby unleashing both growth and increases in employment. If we restricted our spending to the European average, that would release about £7 billion. If we decided to match Belgium's spending, that would release £11·5 billion.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: What arguments would the hon. Gentleman espouse to the workers in the defence industries in specific Labour constituencies when their jobs are lost?

Mr. Livingstone: I would tell them the truth—that their jobs would be lost anyway. The question is whether we actually plan for that. It is inevitable that military spending will be scaled down. Every one of the countries that I have mentioned have reduced their spending. I accept that some third-world countries are increasing their military spending, but overall there is a decline. Workers producing military goods will increasingly be competing ferociously for a declining market. We should be planning for that by recognising the inevitable long-term trend, retraining the work force and retooling the factories. Then, instead of the workers facing unemployment when some foreign nation decides to reduce its purchases of aircraft and armaments, they will be producing high-tech, high quality goods which can be sold to other nations. Indeed, we might even buy them ourselves rather than importing goods.

The workers in our defence industries are usually the most highly skilled in British industry and they work with some of the most modern plant and equipment. They are exactly the workers who could lead a major reconstruction of British manufacturing industry and begin to recreate the manufacture of goods that we long ago stopped manufacturing. When I first started work, the political debate in Britain was about why Britain's goods were not of the same high quality as those of Germany. That is no longer the argument. In many cases, we no longer produce

an alternative in Britain at all. Rather than have defence workers face an increasingly unstable future and be vulnerable to whether or not there will be a war somewhere on the face of this planet, and as other Governments wind down their military spending, I should like those workers to have a future creating new products that will expand the British economy and win export orders that will help to crack the trade deficit.

A couple of years ago, a detailed analysis produced by Cambridge Econometrics and studied dispassionately by House of Commons researchers showed that if our military spending were reduced to the European average and the money saved were used to fund direct investment in industry and social programmes, more employment would be created in the long run. Military spending is the least labour-intensive form of public spending. Provided that the money saved were used to fund infrastructure projects rather than tax cuts, although many jobs would be lost initially, the overall balance would be an increase of 520,000 jobs in Britain by the end of this decade.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): The hon. Gentleman cited the lower proportion of gross domestic product spent on defence by other European countries. Can he say how often those other countries have been invaded this century?

Mr. Livingstone: Without research, I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman, but none of them is in danger of invasion now. Why do we have a British Army of the Rhine—to protect England from the east Germans? We are not only sustaining an Army on the Rhine but paying for it in foreign currency, which makes a further drain on our resources. That is nonsense.

Mr. Jenkin: We read daily in our newspapers that the current democratic regime in Russia is tottering. If that regime were to totter and collapse and a military-style regime were once again in control of Russia with ambitions over the old Soviet Union, might there not be a case for increasing defence expenditure to secure the eastern frontiers of Europe? If the hon. Gentleman agrees, should not we remain capable of responding?

Mr. Livingstone: I have listened to right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, and, overwhelmingly, Conservative Members say that we should not intervene in Bosnia and that it is beyond Britain's capacity to do that, so I hope that no Conservative Member is under the illusion that we could step in and sort out Yeltsin's problems. I do not know how many troops that would take. We know that Russia will not attack the west. Russia is popping over with the begging bowl and Bill Clinton is running around trying to persuade the Japanese to cough up money to sustain that regime. I do not share fears about the fall of the Yeltsin regime. I do not see Yeltsin as a natural democrat. I believe that he has some unpleasant instincts towards strong autocratic rule. He is probably no more democratic than Pinochet. There are much stronger democratic forces in the Russian Parliament.

Ms Abbott: Does my hon. Friend agree that any military action required in response to events in eastern Europe or Bosnia, or anywhere else, ought to take a European form? Conservative Members peddle the pernicious notion that our country is still a world power, as in the days of Yalta. If Britain provides a military force in a peacekeeping or any other role, it should do so side by side with our European partners. We should not assume a role wholly out of proportion with our economic strength.

Mr. Livingstone: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. In the Gulf war the world's leading super-power, the United States of America, could intervene only after securing financial backing from Germany, Saudi Arabia and Japan. Any policing action in Europe or elsewhere in the world should be planned by the United Nations, which is perhaps a little more independent of American interests. The motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Selly Oak has to do with our imperial delusions. My hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) also made mention of that point.

We are living in the past. I blame all previous Governments for that. The failure of the Labour Government in 1945, against tremendous domestic success, was to try to hang on to that imperial image. In debates and at small meetings from which most Cabinet members were excluded, Ernest Bevin, then Labour Foreign Secretary, was saying, "I want an atom bomb with a Union Jack on it, so that I can sit at the top table and negotiate." We must learn to live with the fact that Britain will not be sorting out the rest of the world. I should be delighted if Britain could sort out its own problems over the next 10 years—that would be a major achievement.

Mr. Quentin Davies: If I was a little late for the start of this debate, it was because I could not drag myself away from listening to the hon. Gentleman's delightful performance on "Desert Island Discs". As I listened, I began to think that he had missed his real vocation. Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Labour's failure to adopt a responsible approach to the nation's defences in any circumstances is deeply suspect and that suspicion has greatly increased as a result of the modern Labour party's somersault on the nuclear defence issue?

Mr. Livingstone: As one who has battled to commit my party to a realistic level of military spending, I have found it difficult to persuade members of my Front Bench. I would hardly accuse them of being weak on military spending. They have ignored successive Labour party conference decisions. That is one reason why we could not square the circle in the last general election in respect of how we were to pay for our programme. A monstrous distortion and tissue of lies was rained down on our heads by Conservative Central Office, claiming that Labour was weak on defence. We are simply arguing that our defence expenditure should be commensurate with our real needs, weaknesses and strengths.

Under the United States freedom of information legislation, Central Intelligence Agency advice to successive American Presidents is now available, so it is possible to study all the advice given during the cold war. In the 1950s, it was said that we had a bomber gap. In the 1960s, it was said that we had a missile gap. The CIA's assessment year by year was that there was no prospect of a Soviet attack on the west and no need to make provision for one. Under the old regime and under the present one, Russia wants to sort out its own problems and to construct its own form of society. There was never any serious threat of a cold war escalating into a real war from anything triggered by the Soviet Union. I have cited CIA advice, and I am not aware that the CIA has been taken over by Militant tendency or anything like that.

Mr. Heald: The hon. Gentleman referred to Conservative Central Office propaganda during the general election. The point being made was that if British defence expenditure were to be cut by £7 billion, that is equivalent to the expenditure on the Army, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy. I invite the Labour party to say which of those services it wants to get rid of.

Mr. Livingstone: When one is talking about a phased reduction in spending over five years to bring us down to European level, it seems ridiculous to say that that means that we would have to get rid of an entire wing of the service—for instance, keep the Army at its present size, but get rid of the Navy. That sort of nonsense disfigures election campaigns.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman says that he would introduce a reduction of about £7 billion, phased over five years. Will he be specific? For example, if such cuts took place, how large does he foresee that the Army would be, strictly in manpower terms?

Mr. Livingstone: One would not take such decisions without advice from military advisers about needs. I would do what the Government have not done—I would ask the military for their best assessment of our requirements in the next 10 years and then work out what we could afford. At present, the Government trim a bit off and then add a bit back in response to political pressures and not as a result of planning.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman said that he would decide what we can afford, and therefore what we should have, which is exactly the opposite of what he said a moment ago.

Mr. Livingstone: One would decide the most that the British economy could sustain and consider the major threats that we face. Frankly, I do not think that we face any threats.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We could withdraw British troops from Northern Ireland.

Mr. Livingstone: Yes, we could save £1 billion each year if we came to some more reasonable conclusion about the way forward in Northern Ireland, but I am not particularly interested in that. One would have to debate the realities of that.

We have been caught up in discussions about the drift towards monetary union. I notice from all the opinion polls that the majority of people in Britain think that there should be a defence union because they recognise that there could be major savings. That would have benefits, but the Government are resisting it. It is nonsense to have a lot of little European armies rushing around as though we might one day be fighting one another. I well remember a private remark made by Lord Carrington to a left-wing journalist when they were chatting over a drink after a NATO meeting. My leftie journalist friend asked Lord Carrington why he was so determined to keep the bomb, as it would not deter the Russians. Lord Carrington said, "Of course that is not its objective—while the Frogs have the bomb, we must have the bomb." That is the reality. It is about status, not about any serious military threat.

I must continue rapidly because, with all the interruptions about military spending, I could still be on my feet at 2.30 pm and I would offend a lot of people if that happened.

I have described Labour party policy. In recent debates I know that we have tried to massage that away. We are not talking about cuts that have already been made. The policy was agreed in a vote by more than 80 per cent. at the last Labour party conference, and has overwhelming support outside this building in the rank and file of the Labour party and the trade unions. That policy would release £7 billion, if we take only the average, and that money could be used more productively.

The Cambridge Econometrics report said that if we followed that path and invested the money in other sections of the British economy, we would end up with a net surplus of more than 500,000 jobs. What does that mean? It is not merely the net surplus, but the fact that it would mean 500,000 fewer people on the dole, multiplied by the £9,000 per person that it takes to keep people out of work. I shall not try to do the sums off the top of my head as I shall probably get them wrong, but are we talking about £5 billion?

Mr. Skinner: It is £4·5 billion.

Mr. Livingstone: That is £4·5 billion which could be released for further investment.

The second aspect of the motion is, in many senses, more important. In the short term, much could be done by releasing military expenditure for use in more productive areas, but why do we have that military expenditure? As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham said, it is because we want a huge military to protect our overseas assets. It is part of the old imperial tradition. If one owns much of the rest of the world, one wants a big army in case the locals try to take it back, as they did with the Suez canal. That is logic.

One must consider the core of investment strategy in the City of London. The City behaves as though it has no loyalty to the people of this country. Investment abroad is its primary concern. It is prepared to find the money to build a factory in America, France or Germany that it is not prepared to build here. That is not merely short-termism but a psychology within the City which has no loyalty to Britain. One could tow the City of London to the middle of the Atlantic and leave it there. We would be better off without it. Through pressures on successive Governments, the City has been able to structure all British law relating to the economy to benefit its own interests rather than those of the productive sector of the economy.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does the hon. Gentleman know the net contribution made to our present current account by the City and financial services?

Mr. Livingstone: It is nothing like so important as the hon. Gentleman thinks. I was not joking when I said that we would do better without the City of London, because its distorting effect is much worse than the short-term money that it can earn from overseas investments.

Let us consider the City's track record. It has just had 14 years of freedom under a Conservative Government and it has done exactly what it wanted. The first acts of the Thatcher regime were to loosen all financial constraints on the City. Money flowed out of Britain on a grand scale. Money from North sea oil, which could have been used to modernise Britain and to create a dynamic European economy, was invested abroad. How did the City fare? How did it manage that overseas investment? What did it

do? Most of the money was put into property in America and Japan, just before the property market collapsed. Another vast amount was put into the American and Japanese stock markets, just before they collapsed. The high point of the Thatcher strategy of outward investment was a net balance of about £86 billion in 1986. Since then it has declined to £29 billion—it has been liquidated.

If the £120 billion invested abroad during Mrs. Thatcher's time as Prime Minister had been retained in Britain and used to modernise our infrastructure and to create modern high-tech factories, that wealth would still be here generating jobs and wealth. What happened? A lot went to savings and loans and all sorts of barmy schemes throughout the world. The City of London has had a disastrous impact on the British economy.

About a month ago, I went to the opening of an extension of a factory in my constituency called Contactum, which is the last factory in Britain to make the wall sockets into which one inserts plugs. All other wall sockets have to be imported. That factory is tremendously successful and high-tech. There is nothing in it that does not match the best of German and Japanese production. Contactum has continued to invest. I did not need to ask the reason for its success. It is a family firm and does not have shareholders or the structure that burdens so many other British companies, which constantly must look over their shoulders to see whether the shareholders are getting their share.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough) *rose*——

Mr. Livingstone: The hon. Gentleman should not attack me until I have finished as he might find something even juicier to have a go at.

Investment has been the first call on Contactum's profits each year. Year by year, it has bought the most modern plant and has been able to match our overseas competitors. It is the only British company producing wall sockets which has survived. That is the lesson for British industry in many other firms. Managers have to worry about whether the banks will pull the plug if a nice big cheque does not come out of the profits that year. That is the first call on their profits. During the Thatcher boom years we heard a lot about wages needing to be scaled down.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I am delighted at the hon. Gentleman's conversion to the importance of the family business. Does he agree that during the period when the last Labour Government were in power family businesses were not looking over their shoulder at the bank manager—but were worried to death lest any member of the family died out of turn and the business had to be sold for estate duty purposes? Under this Government's reforms, whereby shareholdings can be handed from one generation running the business to another generation without estate duty having to be paid, family businesses continue to expand.

Mr. Livingstone: I shall arrange a tour of the factory for those Conservative Members who are interested and I shall leave it to them to try to persuade the people who own and manage that factory to vote Conservative. It was not something that I was going to try, because they did not seem to me to be great fans of the Conservative Government. They do not feel that the Government have any interest in industry. The managing director's speech was almost exactly the same as mine—a fact which came as something of a surprise to both of us.

Ms Abbott: Does my hon. Friend agree that it was typical of the 1980s and of Mrs. Thatcher's attitude to industry that her favourite industrialist was Hanson, who knew nothing about making things or selling things? What he did, time after time, was to buy up going concerns, whether it was Imperial Tobacco or Ever Ready, strip out their assets and their pension funds and then move on. That was her type of industrialist—someone who knew how to play the stock market and how to strip out assets.

Mr. Livingstone: The classic example is the film "Wall Street" which depicted that in its worst excesses. What was the end result? The regime that presided over that attitude in the United States has been defeated by the American people. They have elected a President who says that now it is not a question of competing in military terms; Bill Clinton recognises that we have to compete in economic terms. That is the new world. The reality is that nobody is going to get into a hot war. What we are now into is a much more vigorous trade war.

Mr. Sykes: I am sure that Conservative Members are all interested to see the new economic guru of the Labour party coming among us to dispense his wisdom. Perhaps he thinks that he is David Icke. Even David Icke, in his wildest dreams, could not have dreamt up more schemes that would crucify jobs than the Labour party—schemes such as the social chapter, which would put thousands of people out of work, and the minimum wage, which would put thousands more out of work. How does the hon. Gentleman square that with what he is talking about today?

Mr. Livingstone: The choice facing every modern industrial economy is whether to go high-tech, high wage and high skill or to go low-tech, low wage and low skill. Alone of the G7 nations, Britain has taken the low road. All the other major nations are going high-tech and increasing their training, their investment in education and their investment generally. They recognise that they have to compete using the skills of their people—and increasingly their intellectual skills. I remember the memorable words of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, at a City dinner. He said with pride that we are becoming a low skill, low wage economy.

The other G7 nations have realised that there is no future in going downwards. There will always be third world nations able to compete successfully against us because they will be able to pay their work force less than we do, having perhaps even more truncated trade union rights than we have. The only route for Britain to take is the high skill, high-tech route. That is why the Labour party, whatever disagreements we may have about individual aspects of the economy, is committed to industrial regeneration and to rebuilding our industrial base.

That brings me to the most devastating point of all. There is talk now about the green shoots or recovery, but let us look at what is happening day by day in our economy compared with the rest of Europe. By the second quarter of 1992, United Kingdom investment had collapsed to 15·4 per cent. of GDP. That was 25 per cent. below the peak of the last British cycle, but already this

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year our investment is 25 per cent. below that in the rest of Europe. Already this year, we have taken decisions that will lock us into further relative decline, further relative loss of productivity against our major European competitors and further loss of markets.

If we look at what is happening, we have to ask ourselves how we are coming out of the recession. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham said, when was the last time we were in a recession and still running a balance of trade deficit? On every other occasion in the stop-go cycle, when we were at the bottom of a recession we were back in the black. The Government would then start a boom and make a mad dash for the electoral cycle in the hope of being re-elected.

We are running a trade deficit of 2 per cent. of GDP, just under £12 billion, in the depths of the worst recession since the 1930s. As soon as there is any upturn in consumer spending, that deficit will escalate. I predict that before two or three years are out the deficit will probably have doubled and that we shall be running a 4 per cent. of GDP balance of trade deficit which will unleash a major economic crisis, as a result of which the Government of the day will return to the politics of recession to resolve that crisis. People ask me whether I see the green shoots of growth coming. Yes, this year will not be so bad as last year, and next year may be a bit better still, but, after that, we shall be locked into the crisis which will inevitably return because we have again neglected our manufacturing base.

I was delighted by the Prime Minister's interview in *The Independent*. I wondered what the Government might do structurally and physically to give it effect, but the Prime Minister's recognition that the collapse of our manufacturing base has been a disaster was correct and welcome. It was a tragedy that, because of pressure from the Thatcherite wing of the Tory party, he felt that he had to recant those words at Question Time the next day. Until Britain recognises that there is no short cut out of the recession, other than by sustained investment and the reconstruction of our manufacturing base, we shall lock ourselves into year after year of continuing relative decline.

As hon. Members will have noticed, the motion on the Order Paper is not official Labour party policy.

Dr. Lynne Jones: It is.

Mr. Livingstone: It is Labour policy, but not shadow Cabinet policy. Front-Bench spokesmen tend to ignore a large amount of such motions. I agree with everything that my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham said, but he suffers overly from tact. He was very tactful in gently chiding Front-Bench spokesmen about what they should say and do. In politics, people notice much better if you kick them hard with a hobnailed boot. Nothing that I am about to say is meant to cause the Front-Bench spokesmen pain. I say it only with the best of motives. I want to see my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) in government and Labour winning the next election. I am sick and tired of our losing elections because we do not get our economic policies right.

Leaving aside the debate on the personal standing of the Leader of the Opposition or on military expenditure, the core issue of the last two elections was whether people believed that we could improve the quality of their economic life. On both occasions, we failed to demonstrate that we could do so and believed that we could secure victory by manipulating the media or holding a rally in Sheffield to divert attention from the fact that the figures did not add up. I do not want us to repeat those mistakes.

My hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms. Abbott) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) and other members of the Campaign group did a bit of a disservice to the Labour party in the past few years. We did not rock the boat hard enough. We did not want to be seen to be undermining the leadership and we kept a bit too quiet when we thought that official policies were not adequate. I confess that I listened many times to the shadow Chancellor—the present one and his predecessor—launching devastating attacks on the Tories. I agreed with every word, the Press Gallery was full and it was wonderful stuff. The people of Britain knew that the Tories were useless at running the economy and they wanted to hear what we would do. It is not enough to attack the Tories' mismanagement of the economy. People do not need to be told that they are hurting and that they run the risk of losing their jobs. They know that.

Labour should be saying what we intend to do and how it will be paid for. If we wish to expand investment, we should say where we intend to find the money to do so. In one small way, Mrs. Thatcher was right: she repeatedly managed to explain to the British people that the national economy is no different from the family budget. Of course, some things can be done with the national economy which cannot be done with the family budget. Broadly speaking, however, in the long term a country cannot spend more than it earns. That is our problem now: the Government are borrowing because they are spending more than they are earning.

Mr. Jenkin: How much more did the Greater London council spend than it earned when the hon. Gentleman was in charge of it?

Mr. Livingstone: As I pointed out several times to your father——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Could the hon. Gentleman be a little more careful about his possessive adjectives?

Mr. Livingstone: I apologise. As I pointed out to the then Secretary of State for the Environment, we were much better monetarists than the Government. While I was its leader, the GLC stopped borrowing to pay for its capital programme. We paid for it with revenue year by year. Each year that I was leader of the GLC, we reduced its indebtedness. I do not believe in borrowing one's way out of recession. One can increase borrowing for a limited time for limited objectives, particularly for investment, and if the markets see that that is credible they will sustain it, but one cannot borrow as a substitute for strategy.

When I left, the GLC's debt was less than the day I was elected. I often used to embarrass Mr. Patrick Jenkin, as he then was, by pointing that out and saying that I hoped that one day the Government would be as good monetarists as the old GLC. I remember the lesson that I learned in the mid-1970s when I was a GLC back bencher and interest rates suddenly mushroomed. Because of the scale of the

GLC's debt, interest payments were the first call on its resources, which meant the savaging of so many of our programmes. Things were off balance. I am a good old monetarist—you will not get me on that one.

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman said that when he was leader of the GLC he raised increased revenue in order to meet commitments. If he were Chancellor of the Exchequer on Tuesday, how would he increase Government revenue?

Mr. Livingstone: I would increase the top rate of tax to 50 per cent. and aim to claw back money from those who have done very well.

One of the things that I find most depressing is the fact that the Labour party, having gone for a tax policy at the election which hit the average male worker in London who earned £21,000 a year, now appears to be going to the other extreme by talking about no tax increases at all. I want substantial tax increases for the top 10 to 20 per cent. of people who have done so very well under this Government.

Mr. Skinner: Perhaps my hon. Friend could say imediately that, if he were the Chancellor of the Exchequer, he would calculate how much the richest 1 per cent. of people in Britain received in tax cuts during the Thatcher years. He will know that in the first 10 years they received £26·2 billion, which is nearly enough to finance the health service. We would claw it back and ensure that it was used for the health service and for education and to ensure that people had roofs over their heads instead of sleeping in cardboard boxes. Having done that, we would use some to help pensioners and, as a result, my hon. Friend and the rest of us would be elected again and again.

We do not need lectures from the Tories, who are now running an economy which is £50 billion in the red—about £1 billion for each week. At the previous three elections, the Tories told the electorate not to vote Labour because we would borrow, but this Government have done just that on a larger scale than any Government since the second world war. The Tories are the last people to lecture us about how to manage the economy.

Mr. Livingstone: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said. We could do more without increasing taxes on ordinary families. The tax burden on ordinary families is horrendous. We have heard a great deal of nonsense about how this Government have been a tax-cutting Government. In fact, they have merely changed the taxes. Income tax has been dramatically reduced at the top and the burden has been placed on value added tax and, for a while, poll tax. Taxation has become more regressive. The Government are taking more tax out of the pockets of the British people now than on the day Mrs. Thatcher came to office. They have been not a tax-cutting Government but a tax-shuffling Government.

I want the restoration of the top levels of tax. We should claw back money from those who have done so well in the last 14 years, and the money should be distributed to pensioners. Another economic fact of life is that if we distribute wealth from from the wealthy to the poorest, the poorest spend it on the things that they need to improve their quality of life immediately. That, in turn, creates employment because they usually spend it on goods that are not imported, whereas the wealthy often spend their money on other things. That is why countries that have the most extreme inequalities of wealth have the most savage economic cycle. The more one narrows the extremities of wealth, the more one can smooth out the boom and bust of the economic cycle.

Mr. Heald: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that pensioners were the fastest rising income group in the 1980s, with a 35 per cent. rise in incomes in real terms? Pensioners have done well under the Conservatives.

Mr. Livingstone: The hon. Gentleman should sit in my surgery on Monday nights and explain to pensioners how well they are doing on £54 a week when they live in London. They would laugh—or perhaps not. My pensioners are quite good, so they would probably string the hon. Gentleman from a lamp post and enjoy that immensely. Pensioners have been some of the main sufferers. The first act of this Government was to cut the link between pensions and earnings so that there is only a link with inflation—but the prices of things that pensioners buy have been rising at well above the normal rate of inflation year by year. Our pensioners are impoverished compared with pensioners in the rest of Europe.

The Labour party must get its figures right for the next election. I want never again to be in the position I was in in 1992. People stopped me on the streets and asked me to explain how Labour's tax policies would affect them. I added up how much better off they would be with our rating policies rather than the council tax and what they would lose as a result of the national insurance contribution cut-off point being wiped away and ended up feeling like an accountant on a street corner. Some people said, "I think I can afford that", whereas others said, "I can't afford that."

We must get the figures clear next time. We must take Mrs. Thatcher's strictures about the family budget and the national economy. If we want to spend more on investment and on training, we must be precise about where we shall make cuts. There are two areas in which we should make cuts. The first is defence, as is said in the motion. Secondly, we should change the patterns of investment in the City of London so that the City becomes subordinate to the national economy and not the predominant factor in it. We are not poor. We have all the wealth that we need to modernise the nation within five or 10 years and to catch up with the leading nations in Europe in terms of the quality of life and what we can do for our people. The problems are the lack of political will and the distorted priorities of the Conservative party.

I ask my Front-Bench colleagues to be precise. I do not want four more years of sound bites and relaunches of policy again and again. I want us to spell out what our macro-economic policy is. We must explain who will pay and where resources will be released. We must explain how many people we shall put back to work. My hon. Friends would do well to consider the Campaign for Full Employment launched today by my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham. We have come to accept that we cannot have full employment, but that is nonsense. When I was asked recently on "Question Time" what the level of unemployment should be, I said that I thought that we could get it down to a couple of hundred thousand, which was the turnover rate of people going from one job to another. Everyone looked at me as though I was mad. We have allowed the Government and the media to convince us that full employment is a phantom from the past. We

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went through a long period of technical full employment. I grew up in that system. I remember that in 1961 there were riots outside the House of Commons and the Young Socialists pushed the doors open and got in. The restrictions and barriers were introduced as a result of that riot. Unemployment had reached the horrendous rate of 500,000 and it was inconceivable then that unemployment could go beyond that.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, we must put people back to work. There is a range of actions that could create jobs. Let us not forget the billions of pounds on which councils are sitting which could be used to create a proper house building programme. In all those areas, we can persuade the British people that we could manage the economy more successfully than the Government. It should not be difficult. We must be far more precise and specific. Sound bites will not work. I hope that no one will be offended by what I have said. I say it because I wish to see us win. I wish to see us begin to transform the British economy, so I intend to be a little more assertive in the coming years than I have been in the past few. I intend to pont out the deficiencies of the economic policy and of the speeches on the economy being made by my Front-Bench colleagues.

12.48 pm

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who was engaging and totally candid, as he always is.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on her good fortune in securing this debate. She has done us all a service. Her motion has demonstrated to all in the House today and to the country that the left wing of the Labour party is alive and well. Its policies are in good order and I shall be able to assure those of my constituents who suggest that the Labour party now has far more sensible policies and that there is less difference between Conservatives and Labour because the left wing is marginalised that that is not the case at all. I thank those Opposition Members for what they have said this morning because it is important that the country should not forget that the left survives. I wish them well in their campaigns to change what they regard as unsatisfactory policies of those on their Front Bench because their success will assure the continuation of the Conservatives in government.

The motion suggests that, under the Government's economic policy, we are a low-tech economy. What about aerospace, the chemicals industry and pharmaceuticals? Rolls-Royce has been mentioned and is a good and relevant example of a high-tech industry in the private sector that has to be immediately responsive to the need to change its structure when the market changes. In the old days, nationalised industries could never make that response.

When I first became a Member of the House, Sir Anthony Meyer—not, as I think we all realise, a noted supporter of Thatcherite policies—said that he bitterly regretted the fact that, as the Member of Parliament representing Shotton, he had resisted restructuring and job losses at that plant, in the interests, as he thought, of his constituents. Much later, we had a British steel industry which was too large and which had not responded over time to the contraction of the market for steel, so that when the change ultimately came, it was far more dramatic and damaging than it would have been had the industry been more flexible.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: My hon. Friend has referred to Rolls-Royce's response to the market. In fact, the company is responding to significant defence cuts in this country and elsewhere, and any job losses will be as nothing compared with those that would result were the proposals of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) to be implemented.

Mr. Wolfson: My hon. Friend is right. Rolls-Royce is having to respond to two market factors—the decrease in defence demand and the cut in air travel and the present limited demand for aero engines. No company can fly in the face of those two factors if security of employment for those who remain and the health and viability of the company are to continue in the long term.

Dr. Lynne Jones: The hon. Gentleman is referring to nationalised and privatised industries. Is it not the case, however, that, apart from the monopolies, the industries that have been privatised face deep structural problems and falling share prices? In the past, they needed the protection of the public sector to nurture them through difficult times of the kind that they are now facing, with no support from the Government.

Mr. Wolfson: I can in no way agree with the hon. Lady. I cite the steel industry as an example. As a nationalised industry, it was a disaster. No matter how much public money was poured into it, once the market for steel was no longer there, it could not survive. Does the hon. Lady really think that it is a good use of public money to continue to pour it into industries that could support themselves and respond to market demand in the private sector? Public money should go into public services; that is where the Government put it.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) has left the Chamber. He made several points and I had sympathy with some of them. The hon. Gentleman and other hon. Members referred to concern about short-termism in relation to the view that the City of London takes of industry. My views coincide with some of the views that have been expressed.

I am uneasy about the fact that there is still—industrialists confirm this—a gulf between the view that the financial institutions take of industry and the view of industrialists of where their future best lies. I should like to see some change in the tax arrangements so that they discourage short-term investment and encourage longer-term investment. I agree with the hon. Member for Dagenham that training and research and development should bear more obviously on the strength and health of a company and its future when it is being considered for takeover or merger.

In its thinking and in what it says to the public, the Treasury should make clear the difference between borrowing money for infrastructure investment and borrowing money for current expenditure. It is vital that the Treasury makes that distinction because a company must also make such a distinction. We now have an electorate which is financially quite sophisticated. The

electorate finds it hard to understand why the Treasury does not make that distinction as clearly as it is made in private industry.

In relation to the City, I want to refer to the problem of pension funds. The CBI is addressing the fact that employee pension funds generate a great deal of the money that may be invested on behalf of the members of those funds in such a way that it does not contribute to the long-term financial needs of the industry in which those pension fund members work. Increasingly, companies involved in the provision of pensions will look to investment that contains a longer-term view than is currently the case.

Comparisons have been drawn with Germany. I do not draw a comparison between socialist or conservative thinking in terms of the Governments in Germany or Britain. However, bankers in Germany appear to have a much deeper understanding of and direct involvement in industrial management than many bankers in the City of London.

For many years, I was a personnel director in the City. It was very difficult, if not impossible, for young, developing bankers in the City to be exposed directly to the day-to-day problems, or even the wider strategic problems, of industrial development. That is a weakness in our banking system. There should be more career switching between industry and the City. There is now quite a big switch between the civil service and the City. However, we should focus on a switch in career between industry and the City and not simply between the civil service and the City.

I want now to consider briefly the economy and whether we are turning the corner. I have been something of a sceptic of the Chancellor's claims in recent months that we are coming out of recession. I am not immediately impressed unless there is evidence in my own area and constituency of greater confidence returning. I now see that evidence. Confidence is a key factor. The CBI survey shows that there was more optimism in December and January than there was last October. The survey also shows that there has been a major change in the confidence of small and medium-sized companies, which is now at its highest level since the recession began in 1988. The Institute of Directors holds a similar view. There are clear signs that industrial production in the fourth quarter of 1992 was 1 per cent. higher than in the previous quarter. Those are encouraging signs, although they will not solve the problem overnight.

I accept that it is likely that unemployment will continue to rise, because new growth in the economy will take a long time to impinge on unemployment. I entirely appreciate the terrible difficulty in human terms of high unemployment and the risk of social disruption. I do not accept the argument, which it may be heretical for a Conservative to advance but I have no fear of advancing it, that crime is not linked to high unemployment. I am not saying that unemployed people are criminals, but young men in particular who have no work and did not have the benefit of apprentice training from older people, as happened in the past, are more likely to get into trouble than those who have jobs and the ability to earn money and, therefore, have a more secure and complete place in our society.

For me and my hon. Friends, just as much as for Opposition Members, unemployment is an evil which we want to eliminate. The argument is about how best to do it; in that context the competitiveness of British industry is crucial. I will give one or two international comparisons. Contrary to what the Opposition have said, our manufacturing industry has performed well. Between 1985 and 1990, manufacturing import penetration grew more slowly in Britain than in any of the other big six economies. The penetration here was 6·7 per cent. compared with more than 10 per cent. in Germany, Italy and the United States. In France and Japan, import penetration was more than 25 per cent.

I accept that we need to reduce import penetration, but the figures demonstrate the increased competitiveness of British industry compared with the other big six economies. That increased competitiveness is largely due to the shake-out in the early 1980s. It is quite wrong to argue that British industry is not competitive. It needs to get much better, but it is stronger than it was at the beginning of the 1980s.

Dr. Berry: Why did the hon. Gentleman choose to start with 1985 and finish with 1989? I seem to recollect that the Conservatives came to office in 1979. This is 1993.

Mr. Wolfson: I accept that during the major shake-out of smoke-stack industries in the early 1980s and the necessary restructuring of large parts of heavy industry there was a decline. As a result of that shake-out, Britain is now far more competitive.

Since 1981, exports of British manufactures have increased by 66 per cent. That is significantly faster than for any of the other economies of the big six. Between 1983 and 1990—I am taking a wider spread——

Dr. Berry: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wolfson: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would allow me to finish the point. Between 1983 and 1990 manufacturing suffered a slight decline as a proportion of GDP, but that decline was mirrored by similar declines in the economies of other members of the big six.

Dr. Berry: I appreciate that starting from 1983 gives a slightly wider spread, but could the hon. Gentleman explain why he did not start in 1979 and finish in 1993? Could it be that he has been reading a copy of the handout from Conservative Central Office and using the statistics in it in the way that a drunk uses a lamp post?

Mr. Wolfson: No. I answered the hon. Gentleman's question clearly. I accepted that a major restructuring of British industry was necessary and essential in those years. Before we came to power in 1979, industry had become grossly uncompetitive as a result of Labour party policies and the unnecessary sheltering of industries from international competition. In particular, nationalised industries always knew that, ultimately, the Government would pick up the tab. That took away from managements in those industries the incentive to be competitive and effective.

Dr. Liam Fox (Woodspring): Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to point out to Labour Members that Britain's share of manufacturing exports fell faster in the 20 years up to 1982 than at any time in Britain's history, and that that coincides with the period when the Labour party was in office more than at any other time.

Mr. Wolfson: I thank my hon. Friend for that appropriate point.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wolfson: No, I shall not give way any more. I have given way quite a lot, and to the hon. Lady, as it is proper that I should.

I welcome the Prime Minister's emphasis on the importance of manufacturing industry because, during some years of the Conservative Government, we did not give it sufficient emphasis. We argued that the service sector would be the major growth sector. We looked to it, and Ministers placed particular emphasis on it, to the detriment of the country's understanding of, and the readiness with which it would give key importance to, manufacturing industry. I am not suggesting that we ever denigrated manufacturing, but I welcome the fact that we are now putting the health of manufacturing industry higher on the agenda. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will emphasise that point when he sums up the debate.

1.7 pm

Dr. Roger Berry (Kingswood): I do not want to spend too much time criticising the Government's economic record—that is far too easy—but, before I speak about where we might go from here, I want to make one or two factual statements, because the record should be clear and not misrepresented.

We have unemployment on a scale comparable to that of the 1930s. It is not just that we have 3 million claimants —11 per cent. of the labour force—with that figure rising every month for the past 30 months and accelerating over the past half year. For reasons that I shall not go into in further detail, if we measure unemployment on the basis that the Government inherited in 1979, there would be 4 million on the dole. Unemployment now is on the scale of that which was suffered in the 1930s. It is an horrendously serious issue and it must be taken on board.

The Government's record on economic growth is miserable. They have the worst record of any post-war Government. If we resist the temptation to start in 1983 or 1985 and to stop in 1989 and, instead, examine the Government's record from 1979 onwards, over the 14 years the rate of growth has averaged 1·5 per cent. a year. Under the most recent Labour Government, it was 2 per cent., and it was 2·4 per cent under the Labour Government who preceded that Administration. It is astonishing—I note that my statement has not been challenged—that the Government continue to peddle the myth that they have a good record, and even more astonishing that so many people continue to accept it.

The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies), who is no longer in his place, talked about a recession under the Labour Government. We were told that he would abandon rhetoric in favour of facts and hard argument. The hon. Gentleman was clearly off the wall. I asked him when last, in the midst of a recession, we had such a large trade deficit. I have not examined the pre-war period, but, since the war, there has not been any time when we have had a trade deficit of the present magnitude. It is the worst recession since the 1930s.

The second worst recession since the 1930s was from 1980 to 1982, a period just before the statistics begin in the Government's handout. Even then, we had a current account surplus. It is impossible for anyone who is honest about these matters to disguise the fact that our trade deficit is a chronic problem.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Is it not also true to say that never in our history since the keeping of records had we had a manufacturing deficit until 1982?

Dr. Berry: It is true that there had not been such a deficit since the industrial revolution. My knowledge of economic history does not go back to pre-Tudor times. Perhaps there was a deficit during the stone age.

When we talk about the Government's economic record, we are immediately accused of talking Britain down. During Tuesday's debate on unemployment in the manufacturing sector, we were told repeatedly by Conservative Members that those of us who highlight the facts of the recession and Britain's economic crisis are talking Britain down. I started to count the number of times Conservative Members made that comment, and I ended up counting the number of times that the Secretary of State for Employment did so. The Secretary of State made the comment on 17 occasions, about once every two minutes. I have taken account of the right hon. Lady's long interventions, some of which my right hon. and hon. Friends remember rather well. Every two minutes the defence is used that we who point out the facts are talking Britain down.

The Government's records on unemployment growth and trade are the worst of any Administration since the war, and when we point that out we are blamed for making things worse.

Dr. Liam Fox: As the hon. Gentleman is so keen on pointing out what the Conservative Government inherited in 1979, perhaps he will take into account the fact that when the Labour Government were in office the inflation rate averaged 15·5 per cent. Perhaps he will tell us what effect that had on the incoming Conservative Government in terms of growth potential.

Dr. Berry: If we compare that level of inflation with the various rates that were experienced in other comparable advanced industrial economies——

Dr. Fox: Because of oil price hikes.

Dr. Berry: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me. The House will recall that I compared the Government's growth record of 1·5 per cent. with the Labour Government's record of 2 per cent. I forgot to say that the Labour Government had to face two oil price hikes and did not have the benefit that this Government have enjoyed of £100 billion of North sea oil revenue. It is astonishing how incompetent the Government have been, but we are not supposed to talk about it. If we do, we are talking Britain down.

I suppose that I am not supposed to talk about 1,400 more redundancies at Rolls-Royce in Bristol, which will affect many of my constituents. If I do so, I shall be accused of talking Britain down. I suppose that I am not supposed to say that there is record unemployment in my constituency—indeed, it has trebled over the past three years. I am not supposed to say that. We are not supposed to state the facts and ask the Government to respond. The Government's lame excuse is always that we are talking Britain down.

Mr. Heald: The motion suggests a £7 billion cut in defence spending. How would the hon. Gentleman's constituents in the defence industry like that? Mine would not like it.

Dr. Berry: People in my constituency and, indeed, throughout Bristol recognise the vulnerability of their jobs to defence cuts. They want the resources currently being devoted to defence spending to be transferred slowly to non-defence civilian manufacturing. Year after year, under this Tory Government, thousands of jobs are destroyed at Rolls-Royce and British Aerospace in Bristol. The savings from the defence reductions must be reinvested in manufacturing industry so that those companies and others like them are given support.

In our debate yesterday, I could not help but reflect —my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) remarked on it—that 20 years ago the then Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), took Rolls-Royce into public ownership because market forces could not be left to run loose and destroy the company. There is a little ditty about that which goes:

"The people's flag is deepest blue;
We've nationalised Rolls-Royce for you;
And when the profits rise again;
We'll flog the buggers back again"—

which is what they did. That previous Conservative Prime Minister recognised that the aerospace industry both depended on and deserved Government support.

I hope that nothing that I have said suggests that I am anything other than enthusiastic about the Government adopting a far more interventionist and supporting policy towards Rolls-Royce. That is what I said yesterday, it is what I have said today, and it is what I shall continue to say.

With such massive unemployment, it is difficult to understand the Government's grotesque indifference to unemployment, which has become so commonplace. Their justification for paying so little attention to mass unemployment, other than to devise ways of reducing the figure while not creating any jobs, has been that they had to eliminate inflation. They said that that should be the prime target of economic policy and that everything else would follow from that.

By whatever device—tight monetary policy, medium-term financial strategy or an overvalued exchange rate, the latest device—apparently we have only to control inflation and there will be growth and full employment. We are still hearing that story. It is a simple economic argument; indeed, it is so simple that it is staggering in its economic illiteracy. There is no evidence that smashing the economy, closing factories and putting people on the dole results in low inflation—anyone can do that—and, hey ho, almost immediately there is rapid growth and full employment, with inflation just happening to stay at its low level. It is extreme Mickey Mouse economics.

On every occasion that the Government have deflated the economy to reduce inflation there has been higher unemployment—which, in the infamous words of the Chancellor, is "a price worth paying". My constituents do not think it is a price worth paying.

The trading performance of the British economy is a major structural problem. The Government are antagonistic towards public sector borrowing, but they have a cavalier attitude to private sector borrowing. Conservative Members claim that the 1980s, was a wonderful, triumphalist period of Thatcherism. During that time, private consumption as a share of GDP increased by a record 7 per cent.

Virtually all of the growth then was accounted for by an increase in consumption, essentially because it was financed by borrowing. We started with the North sea bonanza and towards the end of the 1980s, there was financial deregulation, easy credit and booming property values, all of which resulted in an unsustainable consumer boom. That economic recovery was financed entirely by borrowing—borrowing from overseas and private sector borrowing within the country.

The Government's strategy today, as in the past, is based on borrowing. In fact, the Government would be delighted if consumers picked up their plastic cards, shot out to the high street and borrowed a lot more money, so injecting some demand into the economy. They see that as the only way to get the economy moving again.

As the autumn statement made clear, investment will not increase significantly over the next 12 months and nor will exports. Therefore, something must happen to engineer economic recovery. The Government desperately want an increase in consumer borrowing with more indebtedness to the private sector, on the back of which they hope there will be an increase in demand. I do not believe that that will be easily forthcoming. Nor do I believe that it is the way to fund an expansion of the economy and to secure the investment that is desperately needed to sort out the supply side, to which the Government are fond of referring.

The Government's own projection of a 1 per cent. growth in output over the next 12 months guarantees that unemployment will increase, and will continue to increase. Indeed, their projection shows no reduction in unemployment by 1996. That is the scale of the problem. Their policy is that unemployment should continue to rise, so that by 1996 there will still be 4 million people unemployed, although, after massaging the figures, they will say that the figure is nearer 3 million. That is unacceptable.

Although important supply-side measures must be adopted, we must also invest in capacity and skills and improve our export performance. In the short term—the next 12 months—an increase in demand is absolutely necessary just to stabilise unemployment, let alone reduce it. According to the Government's own figures, that will not happen unless they step in and boost demand.

It is clear that, over the long term, 2·5 per cent. growth a year is required simply to stabilise unemployment, let alone bring it down. Growth of just 1 per cent. next year will not even stabilise it. Consequently, it is inevitable that an additional £10 billion to £15 billion needs to be injected into the economy as soon as possible to stabilise rising unemployment.

Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), I am not a hard-line monetarist. I am quite prepared to say that it makes sense to borrow £10 billion to £15 billion to fund investment in our economy with the object of reducing unemployment. If, on a wet Tuesday, the Chancellor can borrow £7 billion to prop up an overvalued pound, we can borrow £10 billion to £15 billion to invest in the economy and to create jobs. If anyone feels that that is unacceptable, I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould)—of course the Government can create credit.

In summary—I can see that the Front-Bench spokesmen are anxious to enter the debate quite soon—the important fact is that the Government's strategy is dependent on injecting demand into the economy, but it

[Dr. Berry]

will fail miserably because demand will not occur on a significant scale. We do not want a consumer boom. We need to invest in the economy for long-term growth. Therefore, it is the Government's responsibility to finance that investment.

The only conceivable way in which we can return to full employment in a reasonable time is with a Government who consider the supply side and deal with macro-economic policy, which involves rejecting the ludicrous idea that it is good for consumers and the private sector to borrow to finance their expenditure but that it is madness for Governments to do so. That is a nonsense which is costing us jobs and billions of pounds in national income.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) for tabling the motion, which has given many of us the opportunity to tell the Government that there is an alternative strategy and that, at some stage, someone will have to pick it up and run with it.

1.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Edward Leigh): Following on from those remarks by the hon. Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry), I am sure that the House is grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) for giving us the opportunity to see that the left wing of the Labour party is still alive and well, and as dangerous as it ever was.

The debate was foreshadowed in today's edition of *The Guardian*, in an article headed, "Labour faces challenge from the Left on economic policy", which informs us that the Leader of the Opposition

"and his shadow chancellor . . . will today face the first organised challenge to the front bench's new economics . . . The launch"—

of the Full Employment Forum—

"will run in parallel with a rare debate in the Commons today in which leading leftwingers"—

such as the hon. Members for Dagenham (Mr. Gould), for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) and for Selly Oak—

"will criticise both Government and Labour economics."

We have heard some very interesting speeches.

I am sure that, as always, the House listened with great care to the hon. Member for Dagenham, who, characteristically, gave an intelligent and interesting discourse on our economic history.

As always, we listened with great care and attention to the honest thoughts of the hon. Member for Brent, East. I am sure that he often speaks for the true voice for the Labour party, if Labour Members were as committed as he is to principle, but clearly less committed to holding office in any future Labour Government—if there is one.

I am sure that the House is grateful to the hon. Member for Brent, East for some wonderful remarks, which we shall treasure and which will no doubt figure in some future Conservative campaign guide. For instance, he told us that "the weakness of the Labour party is that it has not been able to construct any viable alternative to the Tories." I think that those were his words. He told us that "their jobs," referring to employees in the defence industry, "are going to be lost, whatever we do." I do not know whether he has told that to his hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton), who was with us briefly. The hon. Member for Brent, East also told us "Yeltsin is no more democratic than Pinochet" and that there were more democrats in the Russian Parliament. We miss that sort of robust debating style, which we used to enjoy when Michael Foot was Leader of the Opposition. It was back today, and we have had a wonderful day.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Leigh: I hope that the *Hansard* reporters picked up that sedentary remark. Conservative Members have enjoyed the debate, anyway.

For the second time this week, Opposition Members have offered the Government a welcome opportunity to explain our approach to transforming Britain's underlying industrial performance and the fact—which the Opposition cannot deny, in the welter of facts that we have been given today—that our productivity, output and exports have grown substantially since the Government came to office in the late 1970s. It was a time when Governments tried to manage demand instead of encouraging efficiency and enterprise. As my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) reminded us, even then that approach was becoming discredited. My hon. Friend also reminded us that even a Labour Prime Minister said that that option no longer existed. However, I noted what the hon. Member for Dagenham said about that. Obviously that is his point of view.

We recall that, at that time, unions were obsessed by demarcation disputes and hindered the introduction of new technology and modern working practices, that social goals had priority over industrial regeneration and that massive subsidies cushioned state-owned industries from competition. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) reminded us in his excellent speech, an industrial welfare state grew up that sapped the spirit of British enterprise which had given us a worldwide industrial lead in the 19th century. Public spending ballooned out of control, as this motion and the left wing of the Labour party invite us to allow again. Taxes rose higher and higher, stifling the incentive to work harder. No wonder that the United Kingdom's share of world trade continued on its downward path.

I remind the hon. Member for Brent, East that we were running a visible trade deficit in 1975. Not surprisingly, in the 1960s and the 1970s we continued to sit at the bottom of the EC output and productivity growth leagues.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) reminded us, we had to change things. No one else seemed to want or dared to tackle vested interests, but we were prepared to do so. From the early 1980s, the Government have rejected the easy road of inaction and muddling through. As my hon. Friends have reminded us today, we have transformed the environment for business activity. We have carried out the policies that my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) urges us to do in the second motion on the Order Paper and which he urged us to do in his speech. His motion refers, as he did in his speech, to creating a climate of low inflation, low taxation, deregulation and free trade. I will deal with all those points in my speech.

Industry's response has been remarkable. I salute our manufacturers for the way in which they have grasped the new opportunities. I believe that they have given a real testament to their confidence in our policies, for since 1981 —the trough of the last recession—United Kingdom

manufacturing output has risen by over a fifth, manufacturing investment has grown by a third and manufacturing productivity has grown by two thirds.

Dr. Berry: Can the Minister explain why he chose to start not with 1985 or 1983, as his colleagues did, but with 1981? What is wrong with 1979 when this Government came to office?

Mr. Leigh: If one is trying to establish credible economic statistics, surely it is wiser to compare the trough of one recession with the trough of another recession. That is why I referred to 1981.

In the 1980s, United Kingdom productivity grew faster than in all other major industrialised countries, after decades at the bottom of that particular league.

Dr. Lynne Jones *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: I shall give way in a moment to the hon. Lady. Perhaps she will allow me to plough on a little, after which she can intervene.

The United Kingdom is doing very well in overseas markets, too. We export a quarter of what we produce. Despite the recession, United Kingdom export volume, excluding oil and erratics, is at an all-time record. In the last quarter, it was up 5·5 per cent. on the previous year, despite the world slowdown. As a result, the United Kingdom's share of world trade has at last stabilised after three decades of decline. Export volumes are expected to increase further this year. Small firms, the lifeblood of the economy, have shared in this revival. I shall now give way to the hon. Lady.

Dr. Lynne Jones: Surely the Minister ought to grasp the basic mathematics—that a large percentage of a small figure is still a small figure? If Japan, for instance, were to increase its exports of cars to this country 1 per cent. and we were to achieve a similar increase in our exports, we should have to increase them by 10 per cent. Surely the Government ought to tackle that issue.

Mr. Leigh: What the hon. Lady and her hon. Friends continually fail to grasp is that if we look at all the economic statistics—at productivity, which has increased by two thirds, and at exports, output and investment—they show a rapid rise in the 1980s. They all show us outperforming our competitors in France and Germany.

Mr. Gould *rose*——

Mr. Leigh: I see that the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene.

Mr. Gould: I have been trying to understand one small aspect of the Minister's case. He suggests that the 1980s was a decade of great economic achievement. Why, as he has just made clear, have his Government—uniquely, as far as I am aware—the luxury of being able to compare the trough of one recession with the trough of another in the same term of government? How did that happen?

Mr. Leigh: Of course, the hon. Gentleman forgets our inheritance in 1979. He forgets that up to 1981, we had four years of any average inflation rate of 15 per cent. He forgets that we were a strike-ridden country, with virtually no confidence in our industries. All those underlying structural weakenesses of the British economy had to be addressed, and were successfully addressed by the former Prime Minister.

The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster)—the only Member of the Liberal party who has spoken in the debate, but who, sadly, has now left—made a special play for small businesses. I remind him that by the end of 1990, about 400,000 more businesses were operating in the United Kingdom than in 1979. British business has shown every confidence in our policies, just as we have had every confidence in its ability to respond. As the climate for business in Britain became more attractive, business overseas started to notice the remarkable and radical changes that we had made and came here in droves. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for Opposition Members to laugh, but we have the No. 1 record for inward investment in Europe.

In 1991, the United Kingdom accounted for 36 per cent. of the stock of United States investment and 40 per cent. of Japanese investment in the EC. The United Kingdom remains the preferred location for foreign investment in the EC.

Ms Abbott: Ministers speak increasingly of inward investment nowadays. Is not one of the reasons why we attract so much inward investment the fact that we speak the English language, which has nothing to do with Government policy? Is not that inward investment problematic in two ways? First, it is predicated on low wages—only 44 per cent. of wages in Germany—which cannot be a long-term basis for our being competitive. Secondly, many components are imported. Although our exports of Japanese cars and televisions are increasing, we have a huge trade deficit because we are an assembly point. The value-added component construction is carried out overseas.

Mr. Leigh: The hon. Lady is right to say that many aspects influence the decisions of potential inward investors and that language comes into it. But there are other factors, such as the skill of the work force, the technology that is available in a locality—for instance, particularly in the lowlands of Scotland, which has an unrivalled record in attracting inward investment—the infrastructure and the Government's economic policies, which reassure the inward investor that he will not be unduly hassled by social controls, that he will pay relatively low taxes and that he will be free to get on and run his business. However, the hon. Lady tries to explain away our record of attracting inward investment, the fact remains that it is there. The Labour party experiences great difficulty in explaining why we have been so successful in attracting inward investment.

Inward investment has helped to reinvigorate key United Kingdom sectors such as vehicles, office equipment and chemicals. It has brought to Britain the latest technology and the best international management practice and has offered tough competition for our companies to measure up to.

Does the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) support our commitment to inward investment, because we have received conflicting signals, such as from the hon. Member for Selly Oak, who seemed to pour cold water on inward investment, from what is stated in the motion and from what was said at the TUC? We want an unequivocal welcome and acceptance for potential inward investors from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East, which would do a tremendous amount for our economy. My right hon. Friend the

[Mr. Leigh]

President of the Board of Trade asked the same question in our debate earlier this week and, again, we heard the mealy-mouthed response that is always given.

We look forward to hearing from the hon. Gentleman because inward investment is associated with thousands of jobs, which would otherwise go elsewhere in Europe. Is that what the motion means by

"the need to develop the domestic productive economy"?

If so, our policies will no doubt be endorsed by both sides of the House.

What caused the transformation? Our policies dealt with all the factors affecting our industrial performance. For example, people around the world have now forgotten the British disease—strikes—because we reformed the unions, making them more democratic and accountable. As a result, in 1991 we had the fewest days lost through strikes since records began a century ago. We restored to managers a renewed confidence to manage. We lowered tax rates substantially for businesses and for individuals. We cut corporation tax from 52 per cent. in 1984 to 33 per cent. now—that is the lowest rate in the European Community or the G7 countries—so companies were left with more to invest. We reduced the basic rate of income tax from 33 to 25 per cent. People have found that extra effort brought extra rewards, as my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury reminded the House.

Mr. Jenkin: I wish to draw my hon. Friend's attention to a firm in my constituency, which could benefit from further encouragement, through the tax system, to invest in research and development. We do not allow expenditure on near-to-market research and development to be offset against tax. It must be capitalised and, effectively, companies pay tax on the amount before they are able to invest it. Could my hon. Friend draw the problem of the family-run, surgical equipment manufacturer, which exports a substantial amount of its production, to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, if not before this Budget, for a future Budget?

Mr. Leigh: I shall certainly draw that issue to my right hon. Friend's attention. We are close to the Budget, so I am not sure whether it would be wise for me to comment now. If he can change his statement even at this late stage, he might do so. Who knows?

Dr. Lynne Jones: Is the Minister not aware that many manufacturers and the Engineering Employers Federation have said that the Government's tax policies have been antagonistic to industrial investment? He referred to the reduction in corporation tax but did not mention the fact that, at the same time, there has been a reduction in tax allowances for investment. The Government gave to those companies that were not investing in manufacturing the same tax advantages as the companies on which we depend to invest for the future. That does not help industry.

Mr. Leigh: If the hon. Lady thinks that her proposals in the motion are not antagonistic to investment and industrial confidence, I do not know what world she is living in.

I have much more to say, but I must get a move on or all the excellent work that I have done in preparing for the debate will have to be curtailed so that other hon. Members can participate.

I conclude by saying a few words about what we have heard from Labour Members today. They spoke of the damage that they believe the Government have done to the economy, so I shall respond by saying how much damage Labour is doing to the economy, even in opposition, and how much more damage it would have done if it had not been humiliated by a record fourth election defeat.

In the past 14 years, Labour has had a problem getting anyone to listen to it about the economy. We should all be grateful for that. However, one group is listening to Labour. It is not the unions, which do not have to listen as they tell Labour what to say in the first place. The people who cannot help hearing what Labour is saying, because it is saying it so loudly and so often, are the foreign business men thinking of investing in Britain, the potential foreign investors whom the Labour party is doing its damnedest to deter and discourage. That is pure madness.

Labour cannot keep its mouth shut, as we have seen and heard today. The minute a Labour Member got up to speak, the words just slipped out. None of them could help it. They said, "Britain can't do this", "Britain can't do that", and "We are a low-tech economy." That is not the image of Britain or of British industry which I see when I travel around as a DTI Minister, but such words slip naturally from Labour Members' lips. Perhaps talking Britain down is an involuntary reaction of Labour Members; some sort of congenital disease or socialist sickness that has spread to the past masters of doom and gloom on Labour's Front Bench.

Anyone who has been involved with the DTI in the past couple of years has seen it all before: the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), who could wipe the smile off one's face at 100 paces, and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who would find it difficult to be happy even if he won the pools. We were hoping for a little more jollity from the hon. Members for Dagenham and for Brent, East but, unfortunately, we did not get it. Perhaps the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East will oblige.

Labour's answer to the problems that the recession has brought was revealed last week in its party political broadcast. I hope that in your busy life, Madam Deputy Speaker, you had a chance to see it. It was an expensive production. Who knows how many staff at Walworth road lost their jobs to pay for it? It was an extremely expensive way in which to say, "Things are terrible. Somebody ought to do something about it, but don't ask us. We don't have a clue." I see Opposition Members laughing—they believe that too.

Labour does not believe in policies any more, as the hon. Member for Brent, East reminded us; it just believes in sound bites. That is precisely what the hon. Gentleman told us this morning. In the party political broadcast, Labour did not offer us a single policy to get us out of recession. It was just motherhood and apple pie—more motherhood than a maternity ward and more apple pie than Mr. Kipling.

No wonder Labour was singing the blues in that television broadcast. Labour's absurd and damaging policies and ideas have been comprehensively rejected across the globe. As my hon. Friends have reminded us today, those policies are sinking in France, scuppered in Spain and scrapped in Sweden. Even in the United States, President Clinton, whom many Opposition Members seek to emulate—not, I hasten to add, the hon. Members for

Brent, East and for Dagenham—is urging the need for responsible fiscal policies and cuts in health spending, and not for more increases in spending.

Labour still does not seem to have caught on. It is a long time since the political boatman cried, "Come in Labour, your time is up." Yet Labour still refuses to listen. Labour Members are still out there, defiantly paddling away when everyone else has gone home without them. Poor old Labour, stuck in the middle of a lake and pretending to have a good time, whistling the old tunes to keep its spirits up all the time. Night time approaches; will Labour never see the light?

Britain is on its way back and the Labour party knows it. Labour Members cannot stand it because good news for Britain is bad news for Labour. Labour's pious words about the need for recovery carry about as much conviction as Woody Allen taking up a new career as a child minder. Labour is desperate for the recession to carry on as long as possible because it knows that if the economy goes up, its opinion poll ratings will go down.

Why does Labour find it so difficult to hail the £1 billion contract won by GEC to build one of the world's largest power stations in Hong Kong or the £448 million contract won by Thames Water to build a new water plant in Turkey—all in the past few months? Is it so difficult for Labour to welcome the fact that half the firms in Europe's top 50 are British or to celebrate the transformation that has taken place in our motor industry, the backbone of British manufacturing strength?

No one would be more pleased than I to see Labour organising rallies around the country, not to spread its message of doom and gloom, but to encourage firms to make the most of the huge advantages of having the lowest interest rates in Europe, the lowest level of inflation for 25 years and the lowest level of business taxation not just in Europe, but across the industrialised world. We are beginning to see why the Labour party finds it difficult to come up with anything positive. Labour knows that recovery would not have been possible if it had been elected. It is no longer just Conservative Members who say that. Labour's own Front-Bench Members are admitting that as well. Let us think about it for a minute.

Before the election, Labour told us that it had a package that would bring recovery and that within four weeks, it would be in the Treasury implementing its shadow Budget for recovery. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East was going to be there. As we all know, the business men and voters of Britain had other ideas and Labour Members were left to languish on the Opposition Benches for four more years.

What have Labour Members been up to these past 11 months, when they have not been talking Britain down, that is? Have they been consolidating the measures that they said would deliver recovery or fine-tuning the policies that the Leader of the Opposition said would win them the election? As we have been reminded today, what has happened is just the opposite. Labour Members have been shedding their election policies like a moulting cat. No sensible business man believed that Labour would achieve recovery through the largest tax increase in history. That was what lay behind the shallow promises of the shadow Budget.

The shadow Chancellor has now admitted in *The Guardian* that perhaps

"further increases in taxation would be mistaken."

The Leader of the Opposition has gone further. Speaking in Paris—talking Britain down again—he said that he thought that it was

"economic madness to contemplate increases in taxation on ordinary taxpayers."

That statement has been severely criticised today.

I have recently completed a series of regional seminars and have talked to more than 200 companies—real companies. I find so much to be proud of in this country—so much entrepreneurial flair, inventiveness, sheer competitive spirit, enthusiasm and success. The House of Commons delights in cynicism and even despair, as has been evident this morning. Let us take pride in our country and in our world-beating industries—chemicals, pharmaceuticals and high technology.

As I have toured industry and met industrialists during my two years in my present job, I have found people calling on the Government not to pick winners but to back winners. That is what we are doing. We have been asked to help spread good technology and best practice around industry and better exploit our scientific and academic excellence. That is what we are doing at the Department of Trade and Industry. Commerce works as effectively as water flowing down hills as long as we do not seek to dam its creative entrepreneurial energies but, rather, to promote and encourage them.

We in Britain have so many advantages—our unique geographical position as an entrepot between Europe and the Americas, our commitment to free trade and our championship of it in Europe, our language and our inventiveness. In partnership with industry, we shall lead Europe out of recession with lower inflation, with lower taxation and with lower labour costs than our competitors—and with a competitive currency. As socialists struggle to find not so much a new identity as any identity, our approach will succeed.

Let us then raise the banner of confidence in this country—as my hon. Friends have done today—and resist Labour Members' efforts to haul it down. Let Labour do its worst; we shall do our best.

1.51 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): It is a little ambitious of the Minister to seek to take credit on behalf of the Conservative party for Britain's unique geographical position. He has had a unique opportunity to defend the Government's record on the management of the economy, yet his peroration seems to have run away with the rest of his speech. He spent most of his time not attacking the Labour party for what it had done in the past—he left that to his Back Benchers—but attacking the Labour party for what he believed it would have done in the future had it won the general election.

The motion before us is specific. It refers to the Government's conduct of economic policy. The Minister is here today to defend that conduct, and it is significant that he manifestly failed to do so.

Two main themes emerged from Conservative Members' speeches: first, the Labour Government had been bad for the country and were probably responsible for all our present ills—overlooking the fact that Labour went out of office in 1979; secondly, if one was looking for good news Conservative Members could forecast good news, though could not actually tell us any good news but only forecasts of good news. The hon. Member for Stamford and Spalding (Mr. Davies) was the exception.

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

He managed to redefine the evidence so that it could be presented as good news. I have to tell him that it could not plausibly be presented as such.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on initiating a stimulating and vigorous debate which has given the Government the opportunity to fulfil a responsibility that they have been shirking since Christmas—to come to the House to defend their economic policies. It is because Treasury Ministers have been shirking that responsibility since Christmas that I was somewhat surprised that a Department of Trade and Industry Minister should have shirked it again today. The evidence tells against him. The current recession, which inspired today's debate, has been the longest in the post-war period. We have now had some 10 quarters—two and a half years—of negative economic growth. It has been not only the longest but the most severe recession that Britain has endured for a long time.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development estimates that the output gap, the difference between actual and trend gross domestic product, suggests a waste of between 6 and 7 per cent. of GDP. As a measure of unproductive capacity and waste of resources in the economy, we are being advised that the results of the present recession absolutely dwarf those of previous recessions. Even the particularly severe downturns of 1974-75 and 1980-81 saw output gaps of 3 per cent., which is less than half the current level.

I have never been so worried about the state of the economy in my country. If I express those fears on my behalf and on behalf of my Opposition colleagues, that does not mean that we are talking Britain down. There is a tendency among Conservative Members to assume that the interests of the country and those of the Conservative party are the same. They are not. It is perfectly legitimate to express fears for the country in which we all live and to attack the Conservative party at the same time. I believe that the economy will not and cannot recover all the output that has been lost over the past two and a half years. The present recession has a permanent, enduring and negative effect on the size of the economy. The growth path has not just been through a cycle; it has shifted permanently lower.

Firms faced with such a large fall in output and such a sustained recession are cutting capacity instead of waiting for an elusive recovery. Firms have gone bankrupt. Others have scaled back, not just temporarily but by scrapping and not mothballing unused productive potential. The latest growth forecast figures were available to the House this morning. The Minister will be particularly interested in what those figures reveal. We now know that the percentage change in GDP since the beginning of the recession in the second quarter of 1990 is 3·5 per cent. in the negative. In terms of billion pounds per year in 1992-93 rates, that is a loss of £21 billion.

That is the range of the problem confronting us. The Minister claimed that the Government had transformed the business environment. I should like to tell the House how Trade Indemnity—the United Kingdom's leading independent credit insurer, as it tells us—believes the business environment has been transformed. According to Trade Indemnity, 30 per cent. of United Kingdom firms are now working at half capacity and there appears to be no evidence of recovery in the United Kingdom economy. It says that construction failures rose 9 per cent. quarter on quarter and that service industry failures rose by 6 per cent. quarter on quarter. It also says that business failures in the northern region, the region which Conservative Members often claim somehow survives the recession more satisfactorily than other regions, rose by 19 per cent. quarter on quarter, providing the worst figures in the country. According to Trade Indemnity, prospects for the economy still appear weak and the danger of United Kingdom businesses being unprepared for the upturn in the economy is severe.

On 16 February, Peat, Marwick McLintock announced that there was an 8·2 per cent. rise in liquidations between 1991 and 1992. That is the scale of the problem. The Minister should have addressed that problem, but he did not. It is the Labour party's contention that the root cause of our problem is the failure to take investment seriously. I must tell Conservative Members that that is not something which divides this side of the House but something which we have in common: we believe in investment in our nation's industrial base and in the potential skills and abilities of our fellow citizens.

The Government should be leading the effort to rebuild our industrial base and to renew our public services, but they deliberately and wilfully march off in the opposite direction as though recession were somehow good for the national soul. As that former Chancellor who left the present Prime Minister with the unenviable heritage of 15 per cent. interest rates and 11 per cent. inflation once said, "If it isn't hurting, it isn't working." As the Prime Minister invites us to consider his inheritance when he became Prime Minister, it seems only fair that we should consider the inheritance of the present Chancellor when he assumed that post. Just because no one on either side of the House has said anything favourable about the present Chancellor in this debate, that does not mean that he does not have the same right as the Prime Minister to complain about his inheritance.

If no one else will stand up for the Chancellor I suppose that it falls to me to do so—because he has a defence. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham (Mr. Gould) said, the Chancellor did not choose the rate at which we entered the exchange rate mechanism; nor did he choose the timing, which was just before the annual meeting of that key factor in the management of international economic affairs, the Conservative party conference. The present Chancellor did not impose ruinously high interest rates on British industry; nor did he maintain them for such a long time; he was only the Chief Secretary at the time and, as the present Chief Secretary would no doubt confirm, that means that he should not be blamed at all. The Chancellor's defence should be to say loud and clear, "I think that you have to consider, first, my inheritance as Chancellor: we had 15 per cent. interest rates and inflation was just under 11 per cent.—what to do, what to do?"

People who moan about the mess that they have inherited usually go on to demonstrate how things have got better since they took over. Is such a defence open to the Prime Minister and his Chancellor? The United Kingdom's economy has shrunk by 3 per cent. since the Prime Minister took office. That failure to achieve growth has happened under the regime of the Prime Minister who reportedly told *The Independent* that "growth" was the

happiest word in the English language. I suppose that we could say that that puts love, sex and money in their place. Each to his own.

The hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) spoke about the OECD's forecasts for the five years from 1989 to 1994. The OECD forecasts that the average growth of the G7 economies will be 9 per cent. Over that time, the British economy will have grown by less than 1 per cent. That clearly shows that the problem has a particular and peculiar British dimension that the Government should address. Investment in Britain has collapsed. It fell by 14 per cent. in the past three years and the Government forecast that it will grow by only 0·25 per cent. this year.

Private credit agencies have told us much about business failures. The Conservative party, the party of enterprise, has presided over the destruction of the enterprise for which the Conservatives claim to stand. The United Kingdom recorded 62,000 business failures in 1992, compared with 47,000 in 1991. That is an increase of 31 per cent. on 1991, which itself recorded a rise of 65 per cent. on 1990. The Conservatives are the party of business failure rather than business opportunity.

The housing market has also been hit by the recession. United Kingdom house prices have fallen by 7 per cent. since the recession began, leaving many families trapped in homes that are worth less than their mortgages. In the depths of a recession one would have thought that the balance of payments would give the Government at least some joy and that they could point to some cause for optimism. That is not possible either. The latest figures for December 1992 show the biggest monthly rise in the balance of payments deficit for two and a half years. It is a rise of £1·5 billion, which is up on November and three times the figure for December 1991.

The end of the year figure for 1992 was £12 billion. That is despite cheaper exports and more expensive imports. Given its position on the economic cycle, that figure shows that there is something structurally wrong with our economy. Did the Minister say a word about that? He did not.

Probably the most important issue and certainly the most important for the parliamentary Labour party is what all this means for our people in terms of jobs and the country's employment base. Does any Conservative Member recognise the following quote?

"The scourge of unemployment has afflicted the industrialised world more harshly than at any time for 50 years. Britain has suffered as acutely as any country."

If any Conservative Member would like to intervene to say where that quote comes from, I shall be happy to give way. No one does. It is from the Conservative party manifesto of 1987, the manifesto on which Conservative Members fought the 1987 general election. That, and the subsequent text, gave the clear impression that the Conservative party was to reduce unemployment, but nothing of the sort has happened. Since the Prime Minister took office, unemployment in the United Kingdom has increased by 1,290,300, from 1,704,800 in October 1990 to 2,995,100 in January 1993—an increase of 76 per cent. The unadjusted figures for the same period show an increase of 83 per cent.

Mr. Jenkin: There have been Conservative Governments who have reduced the rate of unemployment, but naturally no Conservative Government have ever promised to abolish the economic cycle. Can the hon. Gentleman draw the attention of the House to a single Labour Government who have left office with a lower rate of unemployment than that which they inherited from their predecessors?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman is trying to apply to me a test that the Minister and other Conservative Members who took part in the debate would not accept for themselves. When they were asked about the periods that they accepted for the statistics that they used in the debate, they would say that a fair starting point was 1985 or 1981. If one examines closely the record of the last Labour Government and makes allowances for the disastrous overhang that they inherited from the Anthony Barber boom regime which preceded them and for the oil crisis, it is fair to conclude that unemployment was being reduced as they left office to just below 1 million.

We all know that there was a disastrous upturn when the nature of the Government changed in 1979. The Labour party and the last Labour Government can take some pride in their record on employment, but the Conservative party can take no pride on that issue. Indeed, it seems to be the Conservative view that it should not be an issue for government at all, except as an aspect of policy on inflation. It is noticeable that when the Conservative Government claim to have inflation under control we have massive unemployment and, when they begin to think that they should do something about unemployment, inflation starts to go up again. That has been a persistent problem for the Conservative party in government and I have yet to hear a convincing response from Conservative Members on that issue.

Mr. Jenkin: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Brown: I do not wish to eat into the time of other hon. Members who wish to contribute to the debate, but I will give way to the hon. Gentleman a second time.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. It is fair for the Conservative Government to take credit for the fact that in the United Kingdom a higher proportion of the population are in full-time or part-time work than is the case in virtually any of our European competitors. Will the hon. Gentleman at least give us the credit for that?

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman should come to my surgery on a Saturday morning or a Friday night and explain that to the substantial number of my constituents who are out of work. They do not want to know that other people are in work. They want to know why they cannot have a job. It is not that they do not want to work—they want a job.

Let me say a little more about the sort of jobs that Conservative Members seem to support. There are 29 claimants chasing every vacancy, and regional variations are substantial. The experience of the 1980s tells us that many of the long-term unemployed withdraw from the labour force during a recession and do not find their way back during recoveries. Many of the 1·6 million people who have lost their jobs in the past two and a half years may never return to the labour market. That is a human tragedy and one which is a direct result of the policies that the Government have pursued. The Labour party, in opposition and in government, is committed to bringing that to an end. The enduring cost of the recession in scrapped capital and labour is likely to be about 3 per cent. of GDP or £20 billion a year of lost output.

[Mr. Brown]

Conservative Members have talked about low wages in other economies, such as that of Taiwan, as a cause for the success of those economies. They did not mention Taiwan's massive and intelligent industrial investment. Nor did they mention Taiwan's strong manufacturing base. They did not tell us about Taiwan's strong commitment to education, including industrial education, and to training. There are more students in higher education in Taiwan, as a proportion of the population, than in the United Kingdom. The Conservative party and the Government seem to believe that by keeping British citizens poor the economy will recover. We have heard much from Conservative Members about the importance of keeping wages low. They argue that, somehow, that makes people rich, but I do not follow the argument.

I shall give an example that has been provided by a Conservative party supporting newspaper, the Newcastle *Evening Chronicle*, in an advertisement for a job. I think that Conservative Members will like my example because it is the sort of job of which they approve. The job is for a chauffeur-handyman to work in a large house in the Gosforth area. The applicant must have a clean driving licence and at least one letterheaded reference relating to a similar job. The job requirements are chauffeuring locally, travelling long distances and looking after the upkeep of the house. He must have some gardening experience and some painting and decorating experience. There will be daily yard sweeping and gravel raking. He will be required to go out to undertake many odd jobs, including walking the dog and purchasing the shopping. The applicant will be expected to wash and valet the cars. There are many more duties. Understandably, a polite and patient manner will be required. The hours from Monday to Friday are 8.30 am to 6.30 pm. The successful applicant must be available to be on call for 24 hours if necessary. The pay is £150 a week. Despite the requirement to be on call for 24 hours, the advertisement states that some overtime might be available. Finally, it is a necessity that the applicant has his own car. I expect that Conservative Members think that that is a good job. The real test is not political ideology but whether any of them would apply for the job. Would any of them undertake it for £150 a week? We know that they would not.

At least that job was in the country, which is more than can be said for the jobs of those who run our pensions at the Department of Social Security offices at Longbenton. Apparently the Government are proposing to dismiss those workers—and to have the details of about 22 million pensioners sent by satellite transmission to the Philippines so that workers who are paid about 38p an hour can undertake the work instead. That might lead to a saving of money, but it means the permanent loss of jobs in our economy. Not content with seeing manufacturing jobs go abroad, the Government are planning to see how many service sector jobs can be sent abroad as well. What they expect the economy to consist of and what they expect people to live on once they have done that, they do not tell us. There was an opportunity for the Minister to explain that to us, but he did not take it.

The Government's failure to intervene in just about any area of the economy was starkly demonstrated this morning with the collapse of the Taurus system and the subsequent resignation of the chairman of the stock exchange. That is a matter for both the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry. Surely the Minister could have said something about the Government's response to that significant event. If other major trading centres can run computerised trading systems, it is pathetic if it is not possible to get such a system running in this country. It is important that Taurus is in place and that it comes on stream. The failure of the private sector to manage this for itself should be of great concern to the Minister, yet he did not mention it. I shall give way to him if he wants to say that the Government take the matter seriously and intend to intervene directly to ensure that Taurus does come on stream.

Mr. Leigh: The tone of the debate on that issue was perhaps sent by the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone), who told the House that in his view the City of London should be towed away and put in the middle of the Atlantic.

Mr. Brown: The City will note that the Minister felt that he could safely respond to my hon. Friend's remark but not to the point of greater interest to those who work in the City and believe that Britain has a future in the financial services sector—the importance of Taurus. Many people outside the House would have expected the Minister to say something more constructive and to deal with the heart and core of the issue, rather than with my hon. Friend's theoretical threat.

Reference has been made to the 1988 top rate tax reduction, which many of my right hon. and hon. Friends feel contributed to the country's current problems. Those reductions were accompanied by lower interest rates—though not for very long—and by substantial credit relaxations. Dynamic young Conservatives lectured in the late 1980s on the need for "gearing"—the Conservative code for borrowing up to the hilt. The Conservative party's heroes of that time were the Reichman brothers, Mr. Godfrey Bradman, and others who were supposed to turn base metal into gold.

We were told that there would a trickle-down effect —that giving the rich more money to spend would somehow help the rest of us and stimulate economic growth. All that Conservative policies stimulated was asset price inflation, and interest rates quickly increased. There were 10 successive quarters of negative growth. The policy designed to produce economic growth was at least partly responsible for exactly the reverse occurring, paralleled by a massive rise in unemployment and in the public sector borrowing requirement. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Prime Minister spoke of wealth trickling down through the generations. The Conservative Government's achievement is to ensure that debt will go trickling down through the generations—debt incurred at least in part not for investment but for pre-election tax cuts.

If the experience of the late 1980s taught us anything, it was that giving money to the rich to help the rest of us is not just idiotic but positively damaging. Negative growth, rising unemployment and a massive deficit are the peculiarly British dimensions to the present crisis. Output has fallen 3 per cent., while that of our competitors is still growing. Unemployment in Britain is rising twice as fast as in competitor countries. Consumer spending has fallen 2 per cent. below the level of two years ago and investment 15 per cent., while imports have risen 4 per cent. The only real increase in demand is the recession-led 8 per cent. rise

in public expenditure since 1990-91. I have not noticed the Chief Secretary to the Treasury taking credit for that—presumably it was his predecessor's fault.

The challenge facing the Chancellor on Tuesday is whether he will take the measures to get this country back to work. As my hon. Friend the Member for Dagenham rightly said, the Chancellor must focus on employment as a key issue in the management of the British economy—one which requires the attention of the Government. However, the Prime Minister's recent statements in the House do not give us much hope for the future. When asked about employment at Leyland DAF, he said that matter was for the receiver. That could be an epitaph for our manufacturing base.

This country needs investment in its infrastructure and in the skills and abilities of our fellow citizens. It also requires investment in our public services. Many hon. Members have spoken of the need for Britain to become a clever country. I say to the House that it will never do so while we have a stupid Government.

2.18 pm

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I shall have to disappoint the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, (Mr. Brown), because I am happy to support my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and his policies. It is strange that the hon. Gentleman did not mention that this country—which, according to the Opposition, is in a terrible mess—exports a greater proportion of its gross domestic product than any other industrialised nation.

When we debate the economy, we must look around the world, because what happens in the rest of the world has a great effect on this country. Apart from the United States of America, where a floating dollar and high interest rates have produced significant growth, the outlook is pretty bleak. Japan, after a stock exchange crash and the collapse of property values, is teetering on recession. But Europe is the disaster area. That is bad news for the British economy, because Europe is now our largest market. Germany, led by Chancellor Kohl, has mishandled reunification. As a result, Germany's public debt is increasing, interest rates are high, unemployment is rising and the recession is deepening.

The countries that remain in the exchange rate mechanism have interest rates at a level appropriate not for their economies but for the German economy. France, with low inflation, has the highest real interest rates in history and has been driven into recession; unemployment stands at more than 3 million and the socialist Government will be thrown out lock, stock and barrel.

The situation is even worse in Italy, which is in a mess economically and politically. Corruption and mafia influence permeate big business and the political parties. It is not a pretty sight. In Spain, unemployment is rising, the prestige of the socialist Prime Minister is falling and that country, too, is in a mess.

Let us consider the situation in this country. We have the lowest inflation rate in my lifetime. Because we are no longer in the ERM, we have a competitive pound, the lowest interest rates in Europe and low corporate and personal taxation. We enjoy first-class industrial relations, with the number of days lost through strikes the lowest for years. Because we opted out of the social chapter, industry has the advantage of not being weighed down by the social costs of Europe.

Our stock exchange is buoyant. It is always ahead of the game when it comes to the economy—just as the bookies are at election time. We have all the ingredients for a successful economy once the recovery gathers speed. The Government deserve proper credit for that.

Let us consider how things would have been if a Labour Government had been elected last summer. Does the Labour party, never mind anyone else, really think that, under a Labour Government, inflation would be as low as it is today? Labour made it clear that it would have kept Britain in the ERM. There would have been realignment, but interest rates would be higher than they are now and the pound would not be as competitive.

In the general election, Labour was honest in saying that it would increase the burden of taxation. Industry would have carried the burden of not only the social chapter but a minimum wage. Tens of thousands more jobs would have been lost and many more businesses would have gone bankrupt. The result would have been disastrous. There would have been no recovery and this country would have been stuck with the deepest recession this century.

There are three outstanding problems and we should not make any secret of them: a large budget deficit, a big balance of payments deficit and high unemployment. Two of those problems are interconnected—unemployment and the balance of payments deficit. High unemployment is not caused just by recession. It is made worse by the deferred effect of the computer revolution. That is noticeable throughout the financial services industry, banks and insurance companies. Even with a strong recovery, those jobs will never come back.

While I fully support the Prime Minister in our need to expand our manufacturing base, we must be clear that it will not provide jobs, although it will provide wealth. The new robo-factories will not provide all that many jobs. Service industries, and small businesses in particular, will have to provide them. A large hotel will employ many more people than many manufacturing industries and, if it provides services for international tourism and earns foreign exchange, it is just as important to our economy.

Unemployment is interconnected with our balance of payments deficit. Our problem is not so much the fact that our exporters are not successful; it is the amount of goods and services that we import. If we could make significant progress in winning a larger share of our own market, we would help to solve both problems. I can tell my hon. Friend the Minister quite openly that the Government have to be prepared to cheat for our industry in the way that the French cheat for theirs. We also need a change of culture among many of the buying public, as many of them still think that it is best or smarter to buy foreign goods.

Since 1979, British industry has made great strides, as many of my hon. Friends have said. Whereas 10 or 15 years ago, one might have argued that British goods were not competitive or of the right quality, today many British goods are of the best quality in the world and are competitively priced. Yet we still have a prejudice against them. I think that Dixons, the large retailer, sells videos that are made made in this country but sold under a Japanese-sounding name.

My constituency is an example. I represent more pigs than people, because the largest pig production in the country is in my constituency and we produce the finest pigmeat in Europe. Although our bacon was not of the highest quality 15 years ago, I defy anyone today to find

[Mr. John Townend]

bacon of a higher quality or more competitively priced than English charter bacon. Is it not a disgrace that 50 per cent. of bacon bought in retail outlets is from Denmark or Holland? My wife cannot buy British bacon in our local shop. The retailer told her that the cash-and-carries stock only Danish bacon.

I could speak for some considerable time on how to deal with the budget deficit, but I am delighted that the Government have made it clear that it is their number one priority to deal with that problem in the next year.

Because of the problems that we have faced in the past few years—no one denies them—it has become fashionable to write off our economic success of the 1980s, which was based on two pillars of economic policy. The first was progressively to reduce the budget deficit and to bring it into balance—fiscal rectitude, which is something that I have believed in all my life. The second was to reduce inflation by controlling the money supply and letting the pound float.

I am delighted that the Government have returned to those two fundamentals. We have a floating pound and our situation has improved enormously since September. Inflation is low and we are paying more attention to monetary targets. I am convinced that if we stick to those policies our prosperity will return and, as a result, we shall be able to have a long period of non-inflationary, sustainable growth, which will be of the utmost benefit to our people. In this world of changing circumstances, it is clear that economic might, not military might, is all important.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer has done a magnificent job in rescuing our economy. I hope that he will set out his strategy in his Budget and that when he introduces his December Budget it will be clear to everyone that this country has recovered.

2.29 pm

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I am pleased to have this opportunity, just for a few moments, to make one or two points from what was going to be a fairly long speech——

Mr. Livingstone *rose*——

Mr. Heald: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, far from the Chancellor having——

It being half-past Two o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Bills

CHRONICALLY SICK AND DISABLED PERSONS (AMENDMENT) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 March.

WEDDINGS BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 March.

HARE COURSING BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 March.

EUROPEAN UNION (PUBLIC INFORMATION) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 March.

HUMAN FERTILISATION (CHOICE) BILL

Order for Second Reading read.

Hon. Members: Object.
Second Reading deferred till Friday 26 March.

CARRYING OF KNIVES ETC. (SCOTLAND) BILL

Read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

Filton Airfield

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

2.31 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise in the House the many and serious concerns felt by thousands of my constituents at the decision by British Aerospace plc to impose a commercial airport on the engineering complex occupied by British Aerospace, Rolls-Royce and a number of smaller firms at Filton and Patchway. Before I deal with the various areas in which the Government can be or should be involved, I feel that I should set the background to the unprecedented situation in which my constituents now find themselves.

Since the war, and the decision by the city of Bristol to develop its regional airport at Lulsgate to the south of Bristol, it has generally been accepted that airport development at Filton is neither necessary nor desirable, and there has been steady residential development around the airstrip since that date. On a number of occasions, residential development has been opposed by British Aerospace on the ground of safety. Indeed, I recollect an occasion in the 1980s when I was called in by British Aerospace to oppose residential development in the area known as Catbrain in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope), the Paymaster General—whom I am delighted to see in his place—purely on the grounds of safety and noise. On that occasion, British Aerospace was successful in using its local Members of Parliament and its industrial muscle to prevent housing development. On other occasions, it was less successful, and housing development continued to its present level, with further major development planned.

Nevertheless, fears that all of the trend of post-war decisions in relation to the airstrip might be reversed by British Aerospace persisted. That is why, on 3 August 1989, with no other hint that any such development might be contemplated, British Aerospace replied to the chief environmental health officer of Northavon district council in a letter—which I shall, of course, be prepared to table—that is, with hindsight, marked by the opacity of its language and ending with the statement that

"the airfield will continue to be used only for purposes in connection with the Filton Aerospace Company's businesses."

Needless to say, on that date, those businesses did not include the operation of a commercial airport.

With the establishment of RUCATSE—the working group on runway capacity to serve south-east England—to consider the future of airport capacity for the south-east, considerable fears of airport development at Filton were created and a local organisation was formed to campaign against such an airport—CAFCA, the campaign against Filton commercial airport.

On 8 November 1991, the campaign wrote to Sir Graham Day, the then chairman of British Aerospace, pointing out a few of the objections that would be felt locally to such a development, and specifically asking him to give an assurance that Filton would not become a commercial airport. That assurance was given.

On 12 December 1991, a briefing meeting for right hon. and hon. Members who have connections with British Aerospace through their constituencies was held at British Aerospace headquarters in the Strand. I was present with about 20 other right hon. and hon. Members. Sir Graham Day, as chairman, and Mr. Dick Evans, the chief executive, addressed us on the conditions and prospects of the company, and the ways in which they saw the business developing. Mindful of my constituents' concerns, I asked the chairman and the chief executive, as they stood in front of the assembled hon. Members, whether they had any plans to develop any of the company's sites as airports. I received a categorical assurance from Mr. Dick Evans, with the concurrence of Sir Graham Day, that on that date—12 December 1991—the company had, and I quote Mr. Evans' words from memory, "no interest whatsoever in airport development". So categorical was this assurance that, within days, I was able to reassure the officers of CAFCA that although it might be necessary, as reinforcement, to maintain the campaign against potential airport development a little while longer, I had been assured that they need have no fears in this respect.

A few days later, I received a rather strange phone call from Mr. Charles Drace-Francis, chief public relations adviser to the company. He asked me, and I still have a note of the telephone conversation in my files, please to keep Mr. Evans's remarks regarding the potential development of Filton confidential. He claimed that he was phoning from British Aerospace headquarters.

Since I had no reason to doubt the company's bona fides—it is, after all, one of the largest employers in my constituency—I decided, on behalf of my constituents, to pursue the matter in another way. Since I was prepared, as a friend of the company, to abide by Mr. Drace-Francis's words, I wrote to the managing director of the Filton site, Mr. Chris Geoghegan, on 10 January 1992, pointing out that British Aerospace's apparently eager acceptance of the opportunity to look at the possibility of a commercial airport had raised considerable suspicions among my constituents and others living around the airport which it would take some time to dissipate. I offered myself and my position in the House to help the company allay those fears and suggested that we meet within the next month or so to see to what extent our approaches could be co-ordinated.

Had I been more suspicious of what, until the end of 1991, had appeared to be a wholly honourable company, I should perhaps have been more concerned when I received no reply to the letter and had to press several more times eventually to get a meeting, at which I received no information. Had I been more suspicious on behalf of my constituents, I should perhaps have been surprised that when the BBC wished to make a short film about commercial flights from Bristol and, therefore, wished to film at Bristol Lulsgate airport and at Filton, I was refused facilities to film at Filton. I am sure that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, will appreciate that it is difficult for a Member for Parliament to conceive of such duplicity by the principal employer in his constituency, as has since been revealed.

On Friday 5 February this year, British Aerospace announced that it intended to impose an airport on Filton with virtually immediate effect and that it had no intention of applying for any form of planning permission as, in its view, it did not need it. I found out about that decision half an hour before it was announced to the press.

I subsequently found out that the licence granted to the company by the Civil Aviation Authority to operate an airport had first been granted on 11 October 1988, long before every single event and every single statement that I

[Mr. Michael Stern]

have so far listed. I also subsequently found out that, despite all the statements made by officers of the company and all the honeyed words that it had used in every communication on the subject, the company had arranged for inspections of the proposed airport facilities by the Civil Aviation Authority on 19 July 1988, 14 September 1988, 7 March 1990, 7 February 1991 and 1 April 1992. Four of those inspections took place before the statement by the chief executive of British Aerospace plc to assembled Members of Parliament to the effect that no airport development was even contemplated. It is now up to British Aerospace and, in particular, the present chief executive, Mr. Dick Evans—as the chairman of that company at that meeting has moved on—to justify their conduct.

It is, of course, possible that when the company made its series of statements, which I have listed, between 1989 and 1991, the chief executive had no knowledge of the fact that his underlings had already applied for and obtained a licence to run an airport. It is, of course, possible that the airport licence applied for in 1988, and renewed after each of the inspections by the Civil Aviation Authority, was a joke and never intended to be proceeded with. I am sure that many people would prefer either of those explanations to the perhaps more obvious one—that a statement by the chief executive, with the concurrence of the chairman, of one of Britain's major companies to an assembly of Members of Parliament, should now be proved to be wholly false and directly contrary to the facts as they should have been known to those two senior executives at the time. I shall leave the conduct of Sir Graham Day and Mr. Dick Evans to the judgment of history.

I now deal with the issue that is the purpose of the debate—the consequences for my constituents. Since the announcement by British Aerospace that it had held a licence to operate at Filton since 11 October 1988, I have been to see the Civil Aviation Authority and my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping. I have been assured—and I naturally accept the assurance—that any secrecy that surrounded the proposal for Filton airport and any stealth on the part of British Aerospace was not shared by the CAA. That was confirmed in a letter from the chairman of that body to my right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon.

The Civil Aviation Authority is obliged to publish any successful application for an airport licence. Unfortunately, it is obliged only to publish it in the widely read periodical known as *Air Pilot*, which lists all licensed aerodromes. In addition, it was obliged to publish British Aerospace's application on 1 July 1992 for permission to levy airport charges in the equally widely read periodical entitled "The Official Record of the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority", series 6 part II. Should we be surprised that Northavon district council, within whose boundaries the Filton airstrip lies, did not feel it necessary to take out a regular subscription to those publications? Although it now does so, it is far too late to correct the damage done.

My first question to the Minister, therefore, is whether he intends to arrange for wider publication in future of CAA applications that are so damaging to the interests of a substantial community. My hon. Friend's answer will be of considerably wider interest than he may think. In its application to the Civil Aviation Authority, British Aerospace listed nine other airstrips that it regarded as airports and over which it could, therefore, claim the same rights to impose commercial airports without any form of planning permission, environmental assessment or meaningful public consultation.

The airstrips are as follows: Hatfield, in the constituencies of my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans) and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security; Chester, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones); Liverpool, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Garston (Mr. Loyden); Woodford, in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for Cheadle (Mr. Day) and for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton); Dunsfold, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health; Brough, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley (Mr. Cran); Warton, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Fylde (Mr. Jack); Samlesbury, in the constituencies of my hon. Friends the Members for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins) and for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), whom I welcome to the debate; and Prestwick, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). They have been warned.

At least licence applications are published. Other matters that are equally germane to the development of an airport are not. When the CAA receives an airport licence application, it has to consider that application against a thick book of guidelines for United Kingdom airports and to decide whether to grant the application, and what variations from its guidelines to accept if it decides to grant a licence. Although the guidelines can be made available to the public, the public are not entitled under present regulations to know what variations from the guidelines have been permitted by the CAA in granting a licence and, therefore, to what extent the safety or the environment of the public have been compromised in the licence as granted. It should be remembered that the CAA is not concerned—it is not obliged to be—with public safety. It is charged by legislation only with considering the safety of aircraft and the people inside them.

My second question is whether, for the sake of public reassurance, my hon. Friend the Minister will now, or in the future, require the CAA to publish the exceptions it makes to its own guidelines. Regrettably, the Department of Transport, like members of the public and myself, has been duped by British Aerospace into aiding the campaign of public reassurance that has been mounted over the past four years while British Aerospace prepared its ground. Correspondence from the Department in the latter months of 1991, copies of which I have sent to the Department and which I am prepared to table, contains such statements as:

"there is moreover no question of any major runway development taking place . . . without public consultation and a full enquiry into any objections",

and

"there is no question of local authorities not also being able to feed in Members' views on the implications of development",

and

"RUCATSE is carrying out only a generalised survey of the possible implications of the airport's development in the longer term . . . It is not a substitute for the planning processes, and before any major runway development took place at whatever site, there would need to be a planning application, and opportunity for all concerned to put forward views",

and

"there is no question of any major new runway development taking place, at any of the locations being looked at, without full public consultation. If British Aerospace were at some future date to submit a planning application for Filton's development as a civil airport, those with views would naturally be able to bring them forward."

It is clear that if those statements by the Department of Transport are to have any meaning, my hon. Friend will have to look, within the context of the law that he has to operate—I accept that that acts as a straitjacket—for ways in which to convince British Aerospace that the only honest way in which the development can proceed is after a normal planning application and, if necessary, a full inquiry.

I make two general observations. A recent study of population density in the immediate area of the runway at a number of existing airports gives Filton a residential density of 37 per cent. compared with 12 per cent. for Bristol Lulsgate, 13 per cent. for Stansted, 27 per cent. for Manchester, 29 per cent. for Heathrow and 23 per cent. for Gatwick. The population density at Filton is 28 per cent. greater than that at Heathrow, 60 per cent. greater than at Gatwick and 185 per cent. greater than at Stansted.

Is such an airport really to be imposed without the populations concerned even having the chance, as part of the planning process, to have their say? I hope that the Minister will make it clear in his reply that this Government do not represent the ability of big business to ride roughshod over the hopes, environment and property of many thousands of ordinary people who believed that they had some protection against being shoved around in this way. That is what my constituents will be looking for from the Minister this afternoon.

2.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Steve Norris): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) for raising the important matter of British Aerospace's plans for Filton, and I am delighted to see in his place my right hon. Friend the Member for Northavon (Sir J. Cope), the Paymaster General. The airfield is located in both my right hon. Friend's and my hon. Friend's constituency.

Developments at airports usually require a balance to be struck between economic benefit and environmental impact. I hope to be able to reassure my hon. Friend that in this case his constituents' concerns have not been forgotten or ignored. I can also reassure him that the Civil Aviation Authority has handled its role in the matter in a way that is totally in line with the obligations placed upon it by Parliament.

First, I will say something about the CAA's role. One of the main duties of the authority is to ensure the safety of civil aviation in the United Kingdom. In exercising that duty, the authority is responsible for the licensing of aerodromes under the Air Navigation Order 1989. An aerodrome needs a licence if it is to be used for the purpose of public transport flights or certain other types of operation. The authority is required—I stress "required" —to grant a licence if it is satisfied that the applicant is competent to run the aerodrome and that the aerodrome is safe.

When considering an application for a licence, the authority is concerned solely with safety matters. It cannot take environmental or other, non-safety, matters into account. The system quite properly makes a clear distinction between planning matters and safety issues. The question whether the applicant has or has not obtained planning permission for his activities plays no part in the authority's decisions on licensing. I am sure that that is as it should be. This is why the Air Navigation Order makes no provision for public consultation on licensing decisions.

My hon. Friend has pointed out that the authority is charged with considering the safety of aircraft and people inside them rather than public safety. I hope that he will accept that the best way of ensuring the safety of people and property on the ground is to ensure that aircraft take off, fly and land as safely as possible. There are, of course, additional safeguards, in which the CAA is closely involved. The CAA advises local planning authorities on the safety of proposed developments in public safety zones, which may be established at larger airports. It is also closely involved in the process of safeguarding operational surfaces on the approach to airport runways.

The authority's decisions have been duly notified in the required manner and I can assure my hon. Friend that the authority has carried out its licensing duties in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.

The Civil Aviation Authority has also granted British Aerospace permission to levy airport charges. Under the Airports Act 1986, an airport exceeding a specified annual turnover threshold becomes subject to economic regulation by the authority and is required to seek permission to levy airport charges. The authority may refuse to grant permission only on grounds specified in the Act. Last year, British Aerospace applied for and received permission to levy airport charges at Filton, and the application was publicised as required. Again, the authority has acted according to its statutory duties.

My hon. Friend has asked whether the Government will arrange for wider publication of successful licence applications and of applications for permission to levy charges. I take his point that the periodicals in which these currently appear are not found in the average home or doctor's waiting room, and I believe that there is a good case for making the information more widely available. I see that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) is in his place. He will convey to my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation and Shipping my concern that he should consider with the Civil Aviation Authority whether wider publication can be achieved. Variation of licences is a separate issue, but I am sure that my noble Friend would be happy to look at the matter further in consultation with my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West.

The planning issues in this case are a matter for Northavon district council in the first instance and, in the event of an appeal, for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I understand that my right hon. and learned Friend has not so far been involved in the matter, as Northavon has not yet formally challenged the view of British Aerospace that no planning permission is required.

Parliament has rightly decided that it is for local authorities to determine planning applications, having regard to conditions prevailing in the locality, and indeed to decide whether permission is required, but it may be helpful if I restate the types of issues that local planning authorities have to consider in such cases. The purpose of the planning system is to control the development and use

[Mr. Steve Norris]

of land in the public interest. It is a fundamental principle of development control that planning powers can relate only to the use of the land in question.

The granting of permission by the CAA to an airport operator to levy charges automatically confers certain permitted development rights under the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988. The general development order grants a general planning permission for specified classes of development. This means that a specific consent from a local planning authority is not required. Those "permitted development rights" largely apply to minor developments, to developments that are controlled through other approval procedures and to developments by statutory undertakers and local authorities in the performance of their statutory duties.

In the case of an airport operator that is a statutory undertaker, "permitted developments" that do not require specific planning permission include the use of buildings within the airport perimeter in connection with the provision of air transport services. However, major development proposals, such as the construction or extension of runways or the construction of passenger terminals, would require planning permission. Moreover, a range of less substantial development—such as an alteration to an operational building—may be carried out only after consultation with the local planning authority.

In order for a planning application to be required for the intensification of the use of an existing airport, it has to be established whether what is being proposed constitutes a material change of use. As they say in the planning world, that is a matter "of fact and degree". In some cases, it will not be unreasonable for there to have been a general increase in flights, consistent with general trends in aircraft activity. It is no easy task to judge those matters, and I repeat that it would be wrong for Ministers to attempt to fetter the judgment of local planning authorities.

There are new provisions in section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 which enable someone proposing to carry out development to ask the local planning authority to decide whether it would be "lawful" for planning purposes. It is open to British Aerospace to use this procedure if it wishes. If the council gave an adverse decision, the company would have a right of appeal to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will understand that, for that reason, I cannot comment further on the planning merits of the proposal.

I sense that there is some misunderstanding among British Aerospace's critics about the relationship between what is proposed now and previous investigations into whether Filton might be used more intensively. The working group being chaired by my Department, the so-called RUCATSE working group, considered Filton airport, along with Bristol airport at Lulsgate, at an early stage of its work. However, RUCATSE concluded that, because of their location, the two airports were unlikely to be able to cater for much of the expected increase in demand for air transport in the south-east.

I emphasise that there is no connection between British Aerospace's current proposals and RUCATSE. They are on quite different scales of magnitude. RUCATSE was looking at Filton in the context of a wide-ranging study of options for handling an additional runway's worth of capacity. The document from the Civil Aviation Authority —CAP 570—which forms the basis of the RUCATSE study, spoke of the possibility of half the theoretical capacity of a runway being centred at Filton. By contrast, what British Aerospace is proposing now does not constitute anywhere near such a significant increase in capacity or activity.

When RUCATSE was considering Filton, the Government gave assurances that major runway development could not take place there without full public consultation within the planning procedures. Some of my hon. Friend's constituents have suggested that we are going back on that assurance. I assure him that that is not so. As I have explained, British Aerospace is not now contemplating an increase in activity on anywhere near that scale.

By any standards, the option explored in RUCATSE would have constituted major runway development. It would have necessitated substantial additional investment in new terminal capacity and other facilities. By contrast, the present plans utilise the runway which has existed for some 40 years, and the resulting increase in passengers could be accommodated without new building.

Of course, local residents are concerned about the possible level of disturbance that scheduled services might cause. It is perhaps regrettable that so much housing has been built under the runway approach at such a long-established and substantial airfield, but, as I have said, I fully recognise the concerns of local residents. As we believe that local matters are best discussed and resolved locally, noise abatement measures at airports other than Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted are the responsibility of the owners or operators of aerodromes. We expect aerodrome and aircraft operators to reduce, so far as is practicable and reasonable, the disturbance caused by their operations. British Aerospace is aware of the concerns of the local residents. I understand that the company wishes to enter into a legally binding agreement with the local planning authority. The details of such an agreement would, of course, be a matter for the parties involved, but I am told that it would restrict the number of aircraft movements at Filton. I understand that British Aerospace intends to offer a ceiling on annual movements of the same order of magnitude as the level of movements a few years ago, though I appreciate that the mix of types of movement within the total might be different.

I believe that it is also British Aerospace's intention to restrict the type of aircraft using Filton to small, quiet, modern aircraft that meet the latest standards on noise. The largest aircraft allowed for commercial flights would be the BAe146. Those aircraft are much less noise-intrusive than the F111s and other military aircraft that have previously operated at Filton; they are widely known as "whisper jets".

We know from experience at London City airport that such operations over a built-up area need not cause undue disturbance to local residents. I accept that there is no night flying at London City, but it has similar restrictions on the types of aircraft and a more generous ceiling on movements. The airport operators have worked hard to cultivate good relationships with the neighbouring community. The local authority has moved from an initial

stance of opposition to the airport to one of support. I am encouraged that British Aerospace appears to be taking a similarly responsible approach to environmental issues.

Concern has also been expressed about the effect of these proposals on Lulsgate. I understand that concern, but I trust that my hon. Friend will understand that we do not consider that it would be helpful to direct from the centre on whether services should be provided at one location or another.

The Government certainly do not wish to see British Aerospace ride roughshod over the interests of my hon. Friend's constituents, but the company has a valuable resource at Filton. Circumstances outside its control mean that it cannot rely solely on using the site in the same way that it has in the past. The company has a responsibility to the people who work at the site, as well as to those who live in the vicinity. Decisions concerning the future of the airport must take account of those conflicting pressures. I believe that the company and the local community should now make every effort to come to mutually acceptable working arrangements. I wish them every success in doing so.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 1 March 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

Young People (Recidivism)

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the comparative reconviction rates within two years of young people who complete their sentences in custody and those who participate in full-time, away-from-home community service programmes.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The latest available figures for young offenders released from custody relate to those released in 1986 and are published in table 9.1 of "Prison Statistics 1989", Cm 1221, a copy of which is in the Library. Information relating to the number of young offenders who participate in full-time, away-from-home community service programmes is not available.

Dogs

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will inquire from each of the police forces in England and Wales and thereafter publish the costs to the police of kennelling stray dogs and any other associated costs during the most recent 12-month period;

(2) if he will inquire from each of the police forces in England and Wales and thereafter publish the costs associated with policing the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, during the first year of the Act, distinguishing (i) the total spent in kennelling dangerous dogs, (ii) the cost of veterinary fees, (iii) the purchase of protective clothing and equipment and (iv) the estimate of the cost of time spent by police officers being trained to identify the types of dog covered by the Act, in seizing dogs and preparing evidence.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand that my right hon. Friend has been provided with information on the costs to the Metropolitan police of policing the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 and of dealing with stray dogs.

Similar information in respect of provincial police forces in England and Wales is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Strangeways Riot Trials

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the prison staff responsible for security at Manchester crown court were involved in the specifications for the building of the cells, holding and toilet areas to contain the prisoners on trial for the Strangeways riot.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison staff responsible for the security at Manchester Crown court were not involved in the specification for the building of the areas used to contain the prisoners on trial for the Strangeways riot.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults on prison staff at the Crown court, Manchester there have been since the trials relating to the Strangeways riot first commenced.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There have been nine reported incidents of alleged assault on prison staff by defendants in the Strangeways riot trials at Manchester Crown court.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the cost of radios, televisions and multigym facilities provided for the five prisoners who recently escaped from Manchester Crown court.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The television was borrowed from the Greater Manchester police. The prison service provided 11 radios at a total cost of £65 and a multigym at a cost of £3,000.

These items were provided for all the prisoners on trial in connection with charges arising from the Manchester prison disturbance. The prisoners concerned were held in police accommodation not designed for this purpose and which did not have normal regime facilities found in prison service establishments.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what instructions the prison officers were given in respect of confrontation with the prisoners on trial for the riot at Strangeways prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The inquiry mounted by the prison service will investigate all circumstances of the escape of five defendants on trial at Manchester Crown court, including any instructions give to prison staff supervising the trial. It would be wrong to comment further while these inquiries are in progress. All prison officers receive training in how to deal with confrontation with prisoners, including the use of force where that is necessary to maintain control.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the toilet area at Manchester Crown court had been inspected and security arrangements accepted before being handed over to the prison staff prior to the recent escape of five prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The toilet area at Manchester Crown court is part of the original complex built in the 1960s, long before formal arrangements regarding specifications and acceptance of physical security elements of the building were set up between the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Police (Discipline)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers retired on sickness grounds while disciplinary action involving them was under consideration in each year since 1980.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Information about retirements following the laying of disciplinary charges have been collected only since 1991.

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *430*, what were the

ranks of the police officers who retired in 1991 after disciplinary charges had been brought against them, but before those charges were heard; whether they retired on fully accrued pension terms; and whether any enhancements were provided.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Retirement from the police service, whether on grounds of ill-health or otherwise, is the responsibility of police authorities and details are not collected centrally.

Secure Units

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) who will run the new-style secure units planned by his Department;

(2) who will have responsibility for the operation and oversight of the new-style secure units proposed by his Department;

(3) what arrangements will be made for inspection and monitoring of the new-style secure units planned by his Department;

(4) what consideration he has given to the location of further secure places for young people;

(5) what he estimates will be the capital costs of the new-style secure units planned by his Department; and who will pay these costs;

(6) what regime he intends shall be provided in the new-style secure units planned by his Department;

(7) what proposals he has for the reintegration of young people into family and community after a period in the new-style secure units proposed by his Department;

(8) how many places *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each unit will be provided in the new-style secure units for young people being planned by his Department;

(9) what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of secure accommodation for young people in *(a)* England and *(b)* Wales during the last three years;

(10) what will be the costs per week of places in the new-style secure units planned by his Department; and who will pay these costs.

Mr. Jack: My right hon. and learned Friend will shortly be making a statement to the House about his proposals for more effective measures to deal with persistent juvenile offenders.

Unlawful Killings

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the incidence of all categories of unlawful killings, in each year since 1979.

Mr. Jack: The available information is for notifiable offences recorded by the police in England and Wales and is contained in the table. Figures for 1992 as a whole are not yet available.

Unlawful killings[1] recorded by the police England and Wales: 1979-1992.

Year	Number of offences
1979	856
1980	857
1981	794
1982	887
1983	739
1984	844
1985	875
1986	893
1987	982
1988	971
1989	1,036
1990	1,088
1991	1,143
12 months to June 1991	1,121
12 months to June 1992	1,071

[1]Comprises, murder, manslaughter, infanticide, child destruction, causing death by reckless driving, and causing death by aggravated vehicle taking (from 1 April 1992 only).

Residential Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish guidance on fire safety for small residential care homes before 1 April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We sent draft guidance to the Association of County Councils, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and the Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association for comments by 26 March. The guidance will then be considered further and issued as soon as possible.

Homerunner Bus Service

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department's officials will have discussions with those responsible for operating the Homerunner women-only bus service in Bradford with a view to funding the service indefinitely; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Homerunner women's safe transport scheme commenced in November 1989 funded jointly by the Home Office, through the Bradford safer cities project, and the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority, Metro, for a period of 12 months. Further funding from safer cities, Metro and Bradford metropolitan borough council allowed the service to continue until March 1992 to enable the Homerunner steering group to seek funding from local sources to secure the future of the scheme. Exceptionally, safer cities grant was contributed to a further year's funding to enable the service to operate until March 1993, while Homerunner continued to make arrangements for alternative funding.

When the safer cities programme was established in 1988, it was intended that the modest amount of grant funding for each project would act as pump-priming and not to finance schemes on a long-term basis. It has consistently been made clear to the Homerunner scheme that the safer cities grant could not continue indefinitely.

Bradford safer cities final year as a Home Office project is 1993-94 and its steering committee has concluded that, in the light of the more limited grants budget available and the previous history of funding the Homerunner scheme, it could not recommend a further grant for the scheme.

There are no other Home Office grant-giving initiatives available which could assist Homerunner and in these circumstances a meeting with the operators of the service

would serve little purpose. However, I hope that funding will be found from local sources to enable this service to continue.

Safer Cities Project, Bradford

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reconsider his proposals for the future funding of the safer cities project in Bradford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: By the end of this financial year, Bradford will have received safer cities grant funding of over £1 million since the safer cities project was set up in November 1988. In 1993-94 grant funding of £100,000 has been allocated to Bradford and in that year the project will have access to further funds for work specifically directed at leaving in place long-term arrangements for multi-agency crime prevention work. I hope that the safer cities investment will provide a platform for local crime prevention efforts to become self-sustaining after March 1994. In the light of this, I will not be reconsidering my plans to make the safer cities model available to new locations. There is nothing further I can usefully add to the answer I gave to the hon. Member's previous question on 9 February, at column *531*.

Relate

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the funding in real terms for Relate for each year from 1983-84 to 1993-94.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* The Home Office grant in aid to Relate for each year from 1983-84 to 1993-94 is set out in actual terms and real terms, using 1991-92 as the base year.

	Actual expenditure (£)	*Real terms expenditure (£)*
1983-84	788,000	1,254,957
1984-85	827,460	1,254,183
1985-86	864,570	1,242,609
1986-87	890,500	1,239,974
1987-88	912,870	1,204,902
1988-89	935,910	1,151,478
1989-90	958,890	1,106,408
1990-91	1,006,840	1,076,408
1991-92	1,107,500	1,107,500
1992-93	1,511,400	1,449,784
1993-94	1,530,500	1,428,811

In real terms there has been an increase of 13·85 per cent. in the grant during the period in question: the actual increase is 94·2 per cent.

Relate has also received £48,000 from the Home Office and £10,000 from the Department of Social Security.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Social Protocol

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, further to the statement of the Attorney-General, *Official Report*, 22 February 1993, column 241, in the absence of incorporation of the social protocol into United Kingdom law what further legislation would be necessary to enable payment of the EC administrative costs of the protocol.

Mr. Garel-Jones: If the administration expenses were included in the Community budget, the United Kingdom would charge its contribution direct on the Consolidated Fund under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972. If the Community budget were not used, the United Kingdom contribution to any expenses would be met from voted moneys on the authority of the Appropriation Act alone.

Colonial Governors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each of the colonial governors who are currently exempt from paying income tax on the salary they receive; what is their current salary; and what other non-taxable benefits they or their families receive.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

The following governors are paid salaries and allowances by the territory which are not liable to United Kingdom, or local, tax. Their annual salaries and non-taxable allowances are as follows:

	Salary	*Other benefits*
Bermuda	B$117,150	B$68,900 Accountable entertainment allowance
Gibraltar	£50,636	£5,609 Duty allowance £8·51 per day table allowance—paid by MOD
Hong Kong	HK$1,912,200	HK$463,200 Entertainment allowance
Cayman Islands	Cayman $90,804	£6,311 Diplomatic service allowance—DSA—paid by FCO

The governors of St. Helena, Turks and Caicos and Montserrat are paid a local salary by the dependent Governments, and a salary supplement based on the salary of a diplomatic service grade 4 officer which is abated for notional United Kingdom income tax. Their annual salaries and non-taxable allowances are as follows:

	Salary	*Other benefits*
Montserrat	EC$83,136[1] Salary supplement paid by FCO £11,808	£370 Difficult post allowance—DPA £1,578 Representational supplement allowance—RSA £15,684 Frais—paid by FCO EC$6,000[1] Entertainment allowance—paid by Territory
St. Helena	£17,508 paid by Territory Salary supplement paid by FCO £14,897	£712 DPA £3,156 RSA £35,636 Frais—paid by FCO
Turks and Caicos	US$33,978 paid by Territory Salary supplement paid by FCO £18,804	£3,156 RSA £34,770 Frais—paid by FCO US$3,996 Entertainment allowance—paid by territory

[1] EC$—East Caribbean Dollars.

In addition, accommodation is provided by the territory for all governors.

India

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has about the proposal by the Indian Government to legislate for a human rights commission.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, told my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 25 January that legislation to establish a human rights commission in India would be introduced during the current session of the Indian Parliament. The commission would be composed of internationally known independent human rights experts.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what access arrangements have been agreed by the Indian Government for Amnesty International and other agencies to Punjab and Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Narasimha Rao, told my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 25 January that the Indian Government had decided to allow some access in India to Amnesty International and Asia Watch, although they could not go to states where there was trouble and where the visit could itself lead to tensions. But as things calmed down, such organisations could gradually be able to travel more widely.

Inhumane Weapons Convention

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are to ratify the 1981 United Nations inhumane weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The situation remains as set out in my reply to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 16 November 1992 at column *79*.

Armenia and Azerbaijan

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the state of diplomatic relations with Armenia and with Azerbaijan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom has been in full diplomatic relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan for over a year. Her Majesty's ambassador in Moscow is accredited to both Yeravan and Baku. We intend to open a mission in Baku later this year.

UNESCO

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what meetings he has held recently regarding British membership of UNESCO; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs met a group of hon. Members on 25 February. We continue to follow closely matters at UNESCO and our officials have frequent contacts with the organisations's secretariat, member states and other interested parties. The question of the United Kingdom rejoining UNESCO remains under review.

Iran

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the outcome of the Government's review of export licensing criteria for Iran, announced by the President of the Board of Trade on 17 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *479*.

Mr. Hurd: The Government's consideration of the criteria that should be applied in exercising rigorous scrutiny of export licence applications for Iran is now complete. The Government have decided to apply henceforth the following criteria in considering applications for the export of licenseable goods to Iran:

(i) With two exceptions we should not approve licences for any goods or technology on the Military or Atomic Energy Lists (Schedule 1, Part 3, Group 1 and 2) of the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992 (as amended). The exceptions are:

(a) goods essential for the safety of civil aircraft and air traffic control systems;

(b) radioactive material in the form of sources for medical equipment and deuterium labelled compounds for medical use.

(ii) We should not approve licences for any equipment (including the exceptions to the complete ban mentioned above) where there was knowledge or reason to suspect that it would go to a military end-user or be used for military purposes.

Existing export licences, approved under the old guidelines, will remain valid. We shall support efforts among supplier countries, in particular the G7 and our European partners, to promote a harmonised approach to effective controls on the export of dual-use goods to countries of particular concern.

Vietnamese Migrants

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Vietnamese migrants.

Mr. Hurd: The orderly repatriation programme is proving most successful; since it started in November 1991, a total of 487 Vietnamese illegal immigrants have been repatriated from Hong Kong. There were only 12 new arrivals in Hong Kong in 1992 compared with 20,207 in 1991.

Since the start of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' voluntary repatriation programme in 1989, some 35,000 Vietnamese migrants have been screened out and returned home voluntarily, more than 26,000 of them from Hong Kong. There has been no substantiated report of persecution.

At present rates of return and resettlement, the Hong Kong camps should be empty in about three years.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Strangeways Riot Trials

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on who decided on an open door policy during the trials at Manchester Crown court of the riot prisoners from Strangeways prison.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The phrase "open door policy" is not recognised, but it is established policy that criminal trials should take place in open court and be freely reported. During the trials in question, the courtroom in use was kept locked outside operational hours, as were all the courtrooms; circulation of court users segregated; and perimeter doors properly secured, when not in use. All fire escape doors were alarmed so as to alert security staff should they be opened.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the security arrangements for the cells and holding areas at Manchester magistrates court, Crown square.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Security arrangements for magistrates courts are taken into account during the planning of the buildings and in any modifications to those buildings, after consultation with the appropriate authorities. Details of these measures cannot be revealed, as it would not be in the interests of the security of a building to do so.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department which Government Department commissioned the plans for the holding area, the cells and the toilet areas prior to the recent escape of five prisoners from Manchester Crown court; who checked the plans; what assessment was made of their specifications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Government Department responsible for commissioning the plans for those areas was the Department of the Environment—Property Services Agency, north-west region—on behalf of the Lord Chancellor's Department to standards recommended by the Home Office.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what evidence he has of a breach of security regarding a blueprint relating to construction details of the Manchester Crown courts; and what action he has taken.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is believed that a plan, which is currently in the possession of the police, was stolen along with a number of other items during the course of a burglary of one of this Department's offices in 1990. There is nothing to link the theft of this plan and the incident of 17 February 1993 when five defendants escaped from the custody suite of Manchester law courts, but the incident is still the subject of police investigation. Following the burglary, police advice was sought over security measures to protect against burglary and various recommendations were introduced.

Mr. Litherland: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what security measures were included in the refurbishment of Manchester Crown court prior to the recent escape of five prisoners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There was consultation with the police and prison service during the planning of the refurbishment of Manchester Crown court which was completed in 1990. Additional security measures were introduced, again following consultation with the police and the prison service, in connection with the case in question. Details of these measures cannot be revealed, as it would not be in the interests of the security of the building to do so.

Commercial Court

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he has now had the opportunity to consider the Kennedy report on the number of judges required for the commercial court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The report was received by the Lord Chancellor on 10 February 1993 and he and the Lord Chief Justice are now considering the advice it contains. The advice is concerned with the work, deployment and numbers of High Court judges in all the jurisdictions in which they sit and does not relate solely to the commercial court.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Insider Dealing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost of his Department's investigations into David Abell, chairman of Suter, in respect of allegations that he was involved with insider dealing; how long this investigation took; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Inquiries under section 442 of the Companies Act 1985 and under section 177 of the Financial Services Act 1986 into share transactions involving, inter alia, Mr. David Abell were begun in July 1988. These inquiries were concluded on completion of the Companies Act inspections in October 1992, the report of

which was published in January 1993. No proceedings are contemplated against Mr. Abell or any other persons as a result of these inquiries, which in total cost £501,000.

Coal and Energy

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the countries he and his ministerial colleagues have visited to discuss coal and energy issues since taking office; how many days each visit took; and if he will name any colliery visited.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 23 February 1993]:* Since April 1992 I have made the following overseas visits during which energy issues were discussed:

Russia and Azerbaijan—5 days
Belgium (twice)—1 day each

In addition, my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy made the following visits to discuss energy issues:

USA (twice)—4 days and 2 days
Belgium (twice)—1 day and 2 days
Portugal—1 day
Norway (twice)—1 day and 2 days
Italy—2 days
Austria—3 days
Germany—1 day
Japan—2 days
China—2 days

The Minister's first visit to the United States was to see United States coal mining techniques and practices, and promote the export of United Kingdom mining equipment. It included a visit to federal No. 2 mine and Blacksville mine, both in West Virginia.

Visits by other departmental colleagues did not generally involve energy issues.

Owners Abroad

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will refer the bid for Owners Abroad by Airtours to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* I announced my decision not to refer this bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission on 24 February 1993.

Mr. Bowis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received as to the effect on small tour operators of a takeover of Owners Abroad by Airtours.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* All representations received are treated in confidence. All relevant considerations were taken into account in the Director General of Fair Trading's advice to me and in my decision not to refer the proposed acquisition to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Coal Research Establishment

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the current research being undertaken by the coal research establishment; when each piece of research was commissioned and by whom; and when the research will be completed.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* The current research undertaken by the Coal Research Establishment chiefly covers activities related to the British coal topping cycle, the Point of Ayr coal liquefaction plant and a number of other projects related to the coal industry and industrial uses of coal. As British Coal owns and manages the coal research establishment, I have asked the chairman to respond in more detail to the points raised.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Public Libraries

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the public library book fund for each local authority in *(a)* 1982, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* 1992, at 1993 prices.

Mr. Key: Readily available information on book fund expenditure comes from statistics collected by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Expenditure is expressed in pounds per 1,000 population. The table is presented on the same basis with figures adjusted to 1992-93 prices.

Library Authorities	*1981-82 (£)*	*1986-87 (£)*	[1]*1991-92 (£)*
LONDON			
City of London	39,443·13	81,976·24	116,022·95
Inner London			
Camden	4,689·41	[2]—	1,314·59
Greenwich	3,269·56	[2]—	2,576·02
Hackney	294·02	3,238·58	2,040·17
Hammersmith and Fulham	3,087·19	3,033·90	2,646·91
Islington	3,820·38	[2]—	[2]—
Kensington and Chelsea	3,420·29	4,604·56	3,974·01
Lambeth	2,845·28	[2]—	[4]1,438·65
Lewisham	1,754·81	3,231·32	[6],790·77
Southwark	3,941·34	[2]—	1,301·04
Tower Hamlets	716·44	2,974·38	[4]1,484·52
Wandsworth	2,292·60	2,713·09	2,410·26
Westminster	4,456·80	4,997·95	5,307·37
Outer London			
Barking and Dagenham	1,477·54	2,271·80	2,490·53
Barnet	1,959·50	3,102·13	3,686·28
Bexley	2,435·89	2,634·70	2,672·97
Brent	2,694·55	5,172·14	172·01
Bromley	2,301·90	3,523·10	3,248·43
Croydon	2,160·48	2,636·15	2,737·61
Ealing	2,633·14	0·00	1,944·26
Enfield	2,322·37	2,557·77	2,236·16
Haringey	1,721·31	[2]—	952·85
Harrow	2,474·97	2,531·64	2,108·98
Havering	1,674·79	2,003·24	1,999·52
Hillingdon	1,591·05	2,149·86	[2]—
Hounslow	2,627·56	[2]—	3,118·12
Kingston upon Thames	1,832·96	2,515·67	2,443·62
Merton	1,745·50	2,419·86	2,517·64
Newham	2,703·85	585·01	2,063·11
Redbridge	2,590·34	3,340·19	2,811·62
Richmond upon Thames	2,551·26	2,178·89	[2]—
Sutton	2,450·77	3,004·87	2,603·12
Waltham Forest	2,729·91	2,553·41	1,646·11
METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS			
Greater Manchester			
Bolton	1,604·08	[2]—	1,818·12
Bury	1,056·98	1,334·04	1,247·87
Manchester	3,429·59	0·00	3,742·58
Oldham	1,890·65	1,903·08	1,808·74
Rochdale	1,406·82	100·16	[2]—
Salford	1,416·13	1,373·24	1,101·92
Stockport	1,710·15	2,369·05	2,217·40
Tameside	2,153·03	2,155·67	[3]1,851·48
Trafford	1,741·78	1,551·79	1,629·43
Wigan	1,351·00	1,275·98	1,346·91

Library Authorities	*1981-82 (£)*	*1986-87 (£)*	[1]*1991-92 (£)*
Merseyside			
Knowsley	1,341·69	423·87	1,572·09
Liverpool	[2]—	2,318·25	[2]—
St. Helens	1,704·56	2,109·21	[2]—
Sefton	1,326·80	1,644·69	1,988·05
Wirral	1,779·00	2,145·50	1,922·37
South Yorkshire			
Barnsley	1,470·09	175·65	1,124·86
Doncaster	1,641·29	1,595·34	1,758·70
Rotherham	1,533·36	1,892·92	1,959·90
Sheffield	2,275·85	1,204·85	[3]1,596·07
Tyne and Wear			
Gateshead	2,575·45	2,580·99	2,525·98
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,883·21	2,274·70	2,164·23
North Tyneside	2,532·65	1,932·11	[2]—
South Tyneside	2,326·10	3,460·68	1,848·35
Sunderland	1,847·85	1,769·53	2,345·63
West Midlands			
Birmingham	2,128·84	2,385·02	2,066·24
Coventry	1,343·55	1,792·76	1,861·91
Dudley	1,905·54	2,199·21	1,724·30
Sandwell	1,633·85	2,241·31	2,333·12
Solihull	1,410·54	2,299·38	1,163·43
Walsall	1,979·97	436·94	2,519·72
Wolverhampton	2,041·38	2,920·67	[2]—
West Yorkshire			
Bradford	1,040·23	1,313·72	666·16
Calderdale	1,445·90	2,184·70	2,409·22
Kirklees	2,071·16	3,180·51	1,869·20
Leeds	2,080·46	958·07	[4]1,728·47
Wakefield	1,544·53	1,498·08	1,121·73
English counties			
Avon	1,849·71	1,765·18	[7]1,531·43
Bedfordshire	1,628·27	1,721·63	[8]1,784·76
Berkshire	1,414·27	1,769·53	1,308·34
Buckinghamshire	1,736·20	2,647·77	2,542·66
Cambridgeshire	1,782·72	2,123·73	2,167·36
Cheshire	1,565·00	1,557·60	1,778·51
Cleveland	2,692·69	2,607·12	2,397·75
Cornwall	1,738·06	1,939·37	2,151·72
Cumbria	1,157·46	1,683·89	1,896·31
Derbyshire	1,695·26	1,946·63	1,136·33
Devon	1,406·82	2,084·54	2,344·58
Dorset	1,116·53	1,381·95	2,131·91
Durham	1,256·09	995·82	1,534·56
East Sussex	1,429·15	1,413·88	1,492·86
Essex	1,284·00	1,856·63	1,801·44
Gloucestershire	1,455·21	1,432·76	1,577·30
Hampshire	1,369·60	1,968·41	2,128·79
Hereford and Worcester	1,217·01	1,675·18	1,681·55
Hertfordshire	2,032·08	1,818·89	2,527·02
Humberside	1,693·40	2,702·93	2,043·30
Isle of Wight	1,877·62	2,022·12	1,615·88
Kent	1,378·91	1,487·92	1,531·43
Lancashire	1,323·08	2,268·89	2,274·74
Leicestershire	1,334·25	1,482·11	1,617·96
Lincolnshire	1,624·54	1,511·14	1,665·92
Norfolk	1,198·40	1,403·72	1,445·95
Northamptonshire	1,618·96	1,840·66	1,394·87
Northumberland	1,758·53	2,389·38	2,439·45
North Yorkshire	1,613·38	[2]—	1,738·89
Nottinghamshire	1,671·07	2,132·44	1,991·18
Oxfordshire	1,819·94	1,837·76	2,068·32
Shropshire	1,153·74	1,473·40	1,485·56
Somerset	1,377·05	1,824·69	1,694·06
Staffordshire	1,276·56	1,691·14	1,551·24
Suffolk	1,144·44	[2]—	1,719·08
Surrey	1,475·67	1,865·34	1,933·84
Warwickshire	1,859·02	2,443·09	1,859·82
West Sussex	1,730·61	1,701·31	1,947·39
Wiltshire	1,518·47	1,659·21	[2]—

[1]Latest year for which figures are available.
[2]Information not available.
Figures are for expenditure on books unless stated:
[3]Includes newspapers, periodicals, sound recordings and "other".
[4]Includes newspapers, periodicals, sound recordings, video recordings bookbinding and "other".
[5]Includes newspapers, periodicals and bookbinding.
[6]Includes newspapers and periodicals.
[7]Includes newspapers, periodicals, sound recordings, video recordings and "other".
[8]Includes video recordings.

Scheduled Monuments

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to bring forward proposals to amend the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 to prohibit the ploughing of scheduled monuments.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* The present position is that the Ancient Monuments (Class Consents) Order 1981 gives general permission for normal ploughing on scheduled sites which were under the plough during the five years up to October 1981. Specific consent is required for deep ploughing and for the ploughing of previously uncultivated sites. Certain aspects of the order are currently being reviewed, but I see no case for any general prohibition. New trends in agricultural practices can offer new opportunities to protect archaeological sites and monuments through co-operation with the farming community.

EDUCATION

School Places

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will set out for *(a)* each education authority in England and *(b)* in total (i) the number of available places in primary and secondary schools, respectively, (ii) the total number of children on the school rolls and (iii) the number of places considered appropriate.

Mr. Forth: It is estimated that there were some 4·5 million primary school places and some 3·5 million secondary school places in England in 1991. Information on the number of places available in each local education authority is not available. The numbers of pupils being taught in maintained primary and secondary schools in each LEA in England in January 1991 are shown in the table. It is for LEAs in the first place to decide on the number of school places considered appropriate, in the light of local need.

Pupils in Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools (including Self Governing State Schools (GM) in each Local Education Authority in England January 1991

Local education authority	*Primary*	*Secondary*
City	209	0
Camden	9,936	9,891
Greenwich	20,473	13,470
Hackney	15,981	7,592
Hammersmith	8,649	6,050
Islington	14,130	7,223
Kensington and Chelsea	6,091	3,539
Lambeth	18,665	5,955
Lewisham	19,630	11,428
Southwark	19,853	9,487
Tower Hamlets	18,978	10,751

Local education authority	Primary	Secondary
Wandsworth	16,397	9,724
Westminster	8,925	7,043
Barking	14,832	8,675
Barnet	23,026	17,953
Bexley	17,800	14,048
Brent	21,560	10,941
Bromley	19,449	15,414
Croydon	24,821	15,420
Ealing	27,291	11,028
Enfield	22,224	15,958
Haringey	17,937	8,478
Harrow	18,834	7,819
Havering	19,317	15,626
Hillingdon	19,681	12,911
Hounslow	19,122	12,743
Kingston upon Thames	10,031	7,135
Merton	14,317	7,022
Newham	23,724	13,040
Redbridge	17,769	13,484
Richmond upon Thames	10,340	6,977
Sutton	12,234	10,365
Waltham Forest	18,938	11,780
Birmingham	106,293	62,589
Coventry	28,941	17,855
Dudley	29,270	15,727
Sandwell	30,926	18,181
Solihull	18,926	13,774
Walsall	27,593	18,234
Wolverhampton	24,188	15,264
Knowsley	17,992	8,941
Liverpool	49,575	28,765
St. Helens	17,428	12,416
Sefton	26,671	18,534
Wirral	30,770	20,800
Bolton	26,781	17,103
Bury	16,238	10,163
Manchester	45,405	23,957
Oldham	23,936	15,304
Rochdale	21,082	12,437
Salford	22,229	12,879
Stockport	24,385	17,333
Tameside	22,079	13,857
Trafford	19,107	10,731
Wigan	29,620	20,548
Barnsley	21,161	12,123
Doncaster	28,912	20,301
Rotherham	24,385	17,539
Sheffield	45,005	23,845
Bradford	39,238	43,895
Calderdale	19,165	12,519
Kirklees	35,217	26,035
Leeds	54,646	51,079
Wakefield	28,215	20,627
Gateshead	18,038	11,529
Newcastle upon Tyne	22,016	16,501
North Tyneside	16,156	14,729
South Tyneside	15,322	8,798
Sunderland	29,612	18,245
Isles of Scilly	173	112
Avon	76,506	52,513
Bedfordshire	40,100	43,611
Berkshire	59,512	44,480
Buckinghamshire	60,779	33,306
Cambridgeshire	57,327	39,999
Cheshire	87,760	63,195
Cleveland	64,041	38,784
Cornwall	39,300	28,416
Cumbria	42,171	30,370
Derbyshire	82,694	55,570
Devon	76,362	55,146
Dorset	43,443	38,296
Durham	54,872	36,386
East Sussex	48,066	33,689
Essex	120,692	96,169
Gloucestershire	41,554	31,658
Hampshire	126,021	82,259
Hereford and Worcester	47,161	46,963
Hertfordshire	80,553	64,729
Humberside	81,187	57,522
Isle of Wight	6,948	10,130
Kent	121,870	96,596
Lancashire	125,983	82,332
Leicestershire	78,677	59,180
Lincolnshire	47,393	35,321
Norfolk	60,768	39,690
North Yorkshire	56,133	42,732
Northamptonshire	49,023	43,420
Northumberland	20,579	28,184
Nottinghamshire	89,045	62,042
Oxfordshire	39,115	32,450
Shropshire	34,275	26,538
Somerset	33,942	27,418
Staffordshire	89,902	67,214
Suffolk	42,075	46,330
Surrey	74,802	42,172
Warwickshire	44,758	24,511
West Sussex	49,992	39,206
Wiltshire	44,237	32,524
England	4,047,478	2,853,288

Under-eights (Teachers)

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to change the training of teachers for the under-eights; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is considering reforms to the training of primary teachers, including possible changes to the training of teachers specialising in the early years of primary education. He intends that these reforms should be introduced in September 1994. Proposals will be issued for public consultation in a few weeks' time.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the current occupations of the members of the National Curriculum Council.

Mr. Forth: The current occupations of the members of the National Curriculum Council are as follows:

Chairman

MR. DAVID PASCALL: Manager, BP Exploration Control and Business Simplification Programmes.

Members

MR. JOHN BURN: Headteacher, Longbenton Community High School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

MRS. PENNY COOPER: Headteacher, The William Brookes School, Much Wenlock, Shropshire.

MR. BRIAN HUTCHINSON: Community Affairs Manager, BAT Industries plc.

MRS. ANN LOCKE: Lecturer in Child Language Pathology and Education, University of Sheffield.

MISS BRENDA LOFTHOUSE: Headteacher, All Saints Church of England Primary School, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire.

MR. JOHN MCINTOSH: Headmaster of the London Oratory School.

MR. GRAHAM MACKENZIE: Chief Executive, United Engineering Steels (Holdings) Ltd.

DR. JOHN MARKS: Director, Educational Research Centre, London. Also a member of the School Examinations and Assessment Council.

PROFESSOR DAVID REGAN: Professor of Local Government, Faculty of Law and Social Sciences, University of Nottingham.

PROFESSOR ALAN SMITHERS: Director, Centre for Education and Employment Research, University of Manchester.

DR. ROGER VAUGHAN: Chairman and Chief Executive, Swan Hunter Shipbuilders.

MR. ANTHONY WATES: Headteacher, Tavistock County Primary School, Tavistock, Devon.

MRS. JENNIFER WISKER: Chief Education Officer, Somerset LEA.

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the composition of the National Curriculum Council, broken down by the profession or group which each member of the council represents; and if he will state for the teacher members their teaching experience and, if relevant, the age group of the schools in which they currently teach.

Mr. Forth: The members of the National Curriculum Council are selected as individuals rather than as representatives of professions or groups. The professions of the current members are as follows: five are head teachers of primary or secondary schools, four work in further and higher education, four are industrialists, and one is the chief education officer of an LEA. The Department holds the following information on the five members who are head teachers:

MR. JOHN BURN: Headteacher since 1980 of Longbenton Community High School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, an 11-18 school. He is a chemistry graduate who has taught in comprehensive schools for 26 years and has been a Head of Department and Deputy Headteacher. He was also a Senior Lecturer in science for 4 years in a teacher training college. He is a member of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

MRS. PENNY COOPER: Headteacher since 1988 at The William Brookes schoool, Much Wenlock, Shropshire, an 11-18 school. Mrs. Cooper was a Modern Language teacher at a number of mixed comprehensive schools in London and Shropshire and prior to her current appointment she was a Senior Teacher at Ludlow CE School, Shropshire, with rsponsibility for curriculum and professional development.

MISS BRENDA LOFTHOUSE: Headteacher, All Saints Church of England Primary school, Wellinborough, Northamptonshire, a 5-11 school. Miss Lofthouse started teaching in a village primary school in Bedfordshire in 1971. She has also taught in a special school, a junior and a primary school in Northamptonshire and became a Deputy Headteacher in 1976.

MR. JOHN MCINTOSH: Headmaster of the London Oratory School—an 11-18 grant maintained school. Previously an Assistant Master and Deputy Headmaster at the same school.

MR. ANTHONY WATES: Headteacher, Tavistock County Primary School, Tavistock, Devon, a 5-11 school. Mr. Wates has taught in primary schools in Kent, Plymouth and Singapore for the Service Children's Education Authority. Prior to his current appointment he was headteacher of St. Peter's Church of England Primary School, Plymouth.

Special Needs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the funding allocated by his Department to the Office for Standards in Education to cover special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: The following sums have been transferred to Ofsted to cover programme and running cost expenditure for all its activities for the next three financial years, including establishing and running the new inspection system for schools.

Financial year	*£ million*
1993-94	56
1994-95	98
1995-96	133

Within the total sums made available, it is a matter for Professor Sutherland to plan what resources are needed to discharge his statutory duties to arrange inspections and report on special educational needs.

Deaf Awareness Week

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received about the extension of the Deaf Awareness Week recently held in Liverpool schools; what plans he has to encourage the extension of this scheme to other local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received no representations about Liverpool schools' participation in the extension of Deaf Awareness Week. I am sure that other local education authorities will have noted this promotion of deaf culture and signing and that this will inform their decisions about how best to make appropriate provision for children with impaired hearing.

Rugby Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to give a decision on the formation of a joint sixth form for the Harris Church of England school and the Bishop Wulstan school in Rugby.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend expects to reach his decision on the proposal in the near future.

Student Loans

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of graduates who are unemployed and are unable to repay, or are having difficulties repaying, student loans; and what provisions are made for this.

Mr. Boswell: Figures are not available on the number of graduates who are deferring repayment of student loans specifically because of unemployment. The Student Loans Company's annual report 1992 records a total of 16,746 borrowers who had deferred repayments in the last academic year. Any borrower whose gross income, for whatever reason, does not exceed 85 per cent. of national average earnings can defer repayments for a year at a time. These deferment provisions mean that borrowers are under no obligation to repay loans until their income reaches a level where they should be able to afford to do so.

Under-fives

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will publish a league table indicating public education provision for under-fives in Europe.

Mr. Forth: The centrally available information given in the table shows that public and private participation rates combined as separate participation rates are not available. There are also some differences between countries in the

distinction drawn between education and day care. If the United Kingdom figure is broadened to include nursery schools, nursery classes, infant classes, pre-school play groups and group day care, the participation rate of three and four-year-olds rises to over 90 per cent.

Proportion of the age group in education (per cent.)

	1989 *Ages[1] 3 to 4*
Belgium[2]	96
Finland[3]	18
France	99
Germany	52
Ireland	27
Italy (estimated)[3]	76
Netherlands	49
Norway	40
Spain	53
Sweden	42
United Kingdom	46 (50)[3]

[1] Excluding two year olds in nursery education.
[2] 1988 data.
[3] 1991 data.

Pupil Exclusions

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what studies he has commissioned on indefinite exclusions of pupils from maintained and grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: None.

PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Li Ka Shing

Mr. Rogers: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the formal or contractual arrangements which exist between *(a)* Mr. Li Ka Shing and *(b)* Norinco and United Kingdom Government agencies or bodies, including those in Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister: As far as I am aware, none.

Prerogative Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the occasions on which Ministers have exercised prerogative powers in the last 18 months; and how this was reported to Parliament in each case.

The Prime Minister: In the main, specific functions are conferred on Ministers by Act of Parliament. Statute now covers much of the ground which in earlier times was covered by prerogative powers. However, the common law still recognises some prerogative powers as residing in the Crown and some of these are, by convention, exercisable by Ministers. Examples of areas where the prerogative still plays a part are foreign affairs, defence and the regulation of the civil service. Particular examples of the exercise of prerogative power are the issue of a passport or the grant of a pardon or reprieve under the prerogative of mercy. It is for individual Ministers to decide on a particular occasion whether and how to report to Parliament on the exercise of prerogative powers. The relationship between statutory powers and prerogative powers can be very complex and it would be impracticable, and would lead to disproportionate cost, to list all the occasions when action was taken under the prerogative.

Minority Languages

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Prime Minister which department is responsible for the work and advice leading up to the adoption of the European charter for regional or minority languages by the Committee of Minorities.

The Prime Minister: The Welsh Office took the lead in the discussions on the text of the charter, but consulted all other Departments with an interest.

Secure Units

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister which Ministers and Departments are responsible for *(a)* policy in regard to the provision of secure places for young people in England and Wales and *(b)* providing such places and the relevant finances.

The Prime Minister: Policy on the provision of secure accommodation in England and Wales, and the allocation of capital grants for such projects, are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Health and the Secretary of State for Wales respectively.

Local authorities are responsible for providing secure accommodation and for meeting the running costs.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Prime Minister when the secure places for young people announced in 1991 will be available.

The Prime Minister: The provision of secure accommodation is the responsibility of local authorities. The Government remain committed to their target of abolishing the practice of remanding juveniles to prison by 1995-96 and will provide the necessary capital resources to achieve this.

St. David's Day

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to make St. David's day a bank holiday in Wales.

The Prime Minister: We have no plans to make St. David's day a bank holiday in Wales.

Attorney-General

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to the oral statement by the Attorney-General of 22 February, *Official Report*, cloumn 736, whether the Attorney-General attended the meeting of the Cabinet on Thursday 11 February.

The Prime Minister: The Attorney-General did not attend the meeting of the Cabinet on Thursday 11 February.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Incitement to Murder

30. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on his policy of prosecutions for incitement to murder.

The Solicitor-General: The Crown prosecution service would need to be satisfied in such cases that the available

evidence was sufficient to provide a realistic prospect of a conviction. If justified on evidential grounds a prosecution would normally be required in the public interest.

Departmental Library

31. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will obtain for his library a copy of a book the title of which has been given to him.

The Attorney-General: My Department has a copy of the book.

Crown Prosecution Service

32. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the way in which evidence is considered by the Crown prosecution service when it is deciding whether to proceed with a prosecution.

The Solicitor-General: The evidential requirement is that there should be sufficient admissible, substantial and reliable evidence that a criminal offence has been committed by an identifiable person and the evidence provides a realistic prospect of a conviction.

Lawyers (Government Service)

33. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Attorney-General what role his Department has in advising on the qualifications required of lawyers in Government service.

The Attorney-General: The lawyers management unit in the Treasury Solicitor's Department, for which I have ministerial responsibility, has a co-ordinating role in advising the Civil Service Commissioners, and the employing Departments, on any questions relating to the qualifications requried by Government lawyers in England and Wales.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Poverty

37. **Mr. Battle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the World bank's elimination of poverty strategy.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The executive directors of the World bank reviewed implementation of the bank's poverty reduction strategy on 26 January and decided that a progress report should be published annually.

Sub-Saharan Africa

38. **Mr. Carrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom aid to sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1991-92, sub-Saharan African countries received over £334 million in bilateral aid. This excludes certain other flows including those from the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to grant a 4 per cent. annual increase in development aid to sub-Saharan Africa in each year for the next decade.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 10 February 1993, at column *664*.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to ensure that funds allocated to long-term developments in sub-Saharan Africa are not diverted for projects in eastern Europe.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our policy is to keep separate our aid programme to developing countries and our assistance to central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Funds allocated to long-term development projects in sub-Saharan Africa are not diverted for projects in central and eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations the Minister for Overseas Development has made to the International Development Association's 10th replenishment on its 1994 to 1996 budget concerning its annual aid targets for sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Agreement was reached on the 10th replenishment of the International Development Association in December 1992. Donors agreed that between 45 and 50 per cent. of the resources should be allocated to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, subject to performance and in accordance with the other objectives of the replenishment.

39. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions the Minister for Overseas Development had with the Kenyan Government about future bilateral and multilateral aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development confirmed to President Moi and his Ministers that while Britain would continue with a substantial bilateral development programme for Kenya, new balance of payments assistance would be considered only once the Kenyan Government had reached agreement with the International Monetary Fund and the World bank on the economic reform programme. They noted that discussions were continuing between the Kenyan authorities and the World bank and that the IMF were due to visit towards the end of February. Lady Chalker also announced new humanitarian assistance worth £750,000 to help drought-affected Kenyans in Turkana district.

41. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current level of aid to Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Bilateral aid to Kenya in 1991-92 was £29 million.

Hand Tools

40. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the Government have given to provide hand tools to third-world countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Pembroke (Mr. Ainger) on 17 February at column *229*.

Emergency Aid

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to ensure that any emergency aid granted to developing countries by the Overseas Development Administration is paid over and above normal development aid commitments made by the Overseas Development Administration.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The aid programme to developing countries is intended to provide both long-term development assistance and emergency humanitarian aid. The programme is managed to ensure that the emergency aid we provide is not at the expense of long-term development aid commitments.

World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many countries receiving bilateral assistance from the United Kingdom are currently implementing World bank and/or IMF structural adjustment programs; and if he will list them.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 24 February 1993]:* Thirty-five countries which are in receipt of bilateral assistance from the United Kingdom also received support during 1992 from the IMF and/or the World bank for structural adjustment programmes. The countries are as follows:

Morocco
Egypt
Algeria
Jordan
Cote d'Ivoire
Ghana
Sierra Leone
The Gambia
Senegal
Zimbabwe
Zambia
Tanzania
Mozambique
Kenya
Uganda
Malawi
Lesotho
Ethiopia
India
Pakistan
Bangladesh
Nepal
Sri Lanka
Philippines
Brazil
Columbia
Bolivia
Guyana
Honduras
Nicaragua
Jamaica
Poland
Hungary
Czech and Slovak Federal Republic
Bulgaria

The countries listed are those where our bilateral assistance programme exceeded £250,000 in 1992.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Security

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has concerning the number of deaths in the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and Europe which relates to the security situation in Northern Ireland during *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993 to date.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The information requested is set out in the table.

Deaths arising from security situation in Northern Ireland

	Great Britain	*Republic of Ireland*	*Mainland Europe*
1992	6	—	—
[1]1993	—	—	—

[1] As at 22 February 1993.

Dairy Industry

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people were employed in the dairy industry in Northern Ireland in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Hanley: Estimates of the numbers who worked *(a)* on dairy farms and *(b)* in the processing and marketing of milk and dairy products are as follows:

Year	*On-farm*	*Off-farm*
1983	17,575	5,425
1984	17,650	5,350
1985	17,300	5,200
1986	16,850	5,175
1987	16,300	5,125
1988	16,050	5,100
1989	15,975	4,850
1990	15,925	4,350
1991	15,600	4,250
1992	15,175	4,300

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Written Questions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council what are the five highest costs attributed for answering individual written parliamentary questions since 1979 for which costs have already been calculated.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* The answers to my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 16 December 1991, at columns *22-25*; to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell) on 18 January 1990, at columns *382-89*; to my then hon. Friend the Member for Pembroke, Mr. Bennett, on 25 May 1989, at columns *695-719*; to my hon. Friend the Member for Epping Forest (Mr. Norris) on 9 May 1988, at columns *628-44*; to my then hon. Friend the Member for Darlington, Mr. Fallon, on 11 May 1987, at columns *4-14*.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Lord President of the Council when he expects to answer the question of 20 January from the hon. Member for Newport, West on the costs attributed for answering parliamentary questions.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member today.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Universities (Business Names)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to the answer of 15 February by the Secretary of State for Education, *Official Report*, column *51*, what action the Privy Council takes over applications to register a business name containing the word university.

Mr. Newton: Since June 1992, the Privy Council has been specified as the relevant body under the Company and Business Names Regulations 1981 whose consent is required to the use of the word "university" in a business name. In considering applications for consent, it is the practice to seek the advice of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many personal equity plans have been taken out in each of the last three years; and what was the cost to the Exchequer of the associated tax reliefs.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is as follows:

	Number of plans taken out (thousands)		*Estimated total cost of income tax relief (£ million)*
	General	*Single company*	
[1] 1989	580	—	20
1990-91	500	—	45
[2] 1991-92	640	110	90

[1] And first quarter of 1990.
[2] Provisional.

Mortgage Tax Relief

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total value of providing mortgage interest tax relief for each year since 1979 inclusive for *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Wales, *(c)* England, *(d)* Northern Ireland, *(e)* each English region and *(f)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* The information is given in my reply to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 25 February 1993, *Official Report*, col. *686*.

SCOTLAND

Publicity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 2 June 1992 to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), *Official Report*, column *435*, what is his Department's *(a)* current outturn estimate for publicity expenditure for 1992-93 and *(b)* budgeted publicity expenditure for 1993-94.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Estimated outturn for publicity expenditure for 1992-93 is £3·1 million. Expenditure provision for 1993-94 is £3·1 million.

DEFENCE

Libya (Chemical Weapons)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information Her Majesty's Government have concerning the construction by Libya of a copy of the Rabta Pharma-150 chemical weapons plant in Tarbunah, near Tripoli.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Government believe that Libya is constructing a chemical weapons factory at Tarhunah, some 40 miles from Tripoli which, when completed, may be capable of producing both mustard and nerve agents. The United Kingdom is actively involved, with its Australia group partners, in seeking to prevent supplies to Libya's chemical weapons programme.

Bullying

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will review the procedures for dealing with bullying in the Army; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. The current procedures are well established and all service personnel are aware that behaviour of this kind will not be tolerated. Any allegation or complaint of bullying or suspected bullying brought to the attention of a commanding officer is investigated. Depending on the strength of the evidence, disciplinary action will be taken against the alleged offenders.

Defence Spending

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what initiatives were taken in the Council of Ministers under Britain's presidency of the European Community to address problems arising from reductions in defence expenditure.

Mr. Aitken: No such initiatives were taken in the Council of Ministers.

Arabian Peninsula

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what involvement his Department has had with Gulf leaders in preparation for expansion of the peninsula shield for the defence of the Arabian peninsula.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Ministers and officials of the Ministry of Defence maintain regular contact with Gulf leaders and their staffs. During these contacts we have encouraged the Gulf Co-operation Council states to develop their arrangements for a collective security force.

Kuwait

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers and ranks of the British land forces that were sent to Kuwait in January during the Iraq-coalition confrontation.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No members of the British land forces were sent to Kuwait in January 1993.

Idex 93 Exhibition

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what involvement his Department had in the preparation for the Idex 93 exhibition in Abu Dhabi opening on 15 February; and what positions were held by staff of his Department who will be present for the event.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 1 February 1993, *Official Report* column *33*.

I made a ministerial visit to this important exhibition in order to support the participating British companies and to discuss export sales with the Government of the United Arab Emirates. A number of my officials also attended for the same purpose.

Redundancies

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel currently serving in *(a)* Bosnia and *(b)* Northern Ireland have been issued with compulsory redundancy notices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Eight Army officers currently serving in the former Yugoslavia and 36 Army officers currently serving in Northern Ireland were notified on 25 February that they had been selected for compulsory redundancy. Personnel selected for compulsory redundancy will leave the Army by 1 March 1994 and those serving overseas may apply to spend their last six months in the United Kingdom. No shore-based naval personnel, or RAF personnel, currently serving in the former Yugoslavia or Northern Ireland have been selected for compulsory redundancy.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel currently serving in *(a)* Bosnia and *(b)* Northern Ireland have requested voluntary redundancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers of service personnel serving in the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland who have applied for voluntary redundancy are as follows:

Service	*Former Yugoslavia*	*Northern Ireland*
Royal Navy[1]		
Officers	1	2
Ratings	[2]2	[2]6
Army[3]		
Officers	9	14
Soldiers	80	387
RAF		
Officers	—	—
Airmen/women	—	—

[1] Figures relate to shore-based personnel only.
[2] Applications unsuccessful.
[3] Figures provided relate to successful applications. Due to the frequency of individual and unit moves, it is not possible to identify by theatre those who unsuccessfully applied for redundancy last autumn.

HEALTH

Activity Increases

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many studies her Department has commissioned concerning the cost-effectiveness of increases in activity achieved in the period 1990-93; and what conclusions she has drawn.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Individual regions may have commissioned their own research, but this information is not collected centrally.

Food (Chemicals)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish information submitted to her Department's Committee on the Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment by private companies.

Mr. Sackville: None. The annual report of the Committees on Toxicity, Mutagenicity and Carcinogenicity outlines the issues considered and the advice given to the Government. A copy is available in the Library.

Primary Care

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral statement of 16 February, *Official Report*, columns 133-37, how much of the £170 million capital spending on primary care in London will be spent over each of the next six years.

Mr. Sackville: In all, there will be over £40 million extra for primary care in London in 1993-94. The balance between capital and revenue spending will be for local decision as plans for the London initiative zone develop. The pattern of capital funding over subsequent years will depend on the level of need identified and the resources available. The Government are committed to providing £170 million for capital investment in London's primary care over the next six years.

Cancer Research

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration was given to including the electric field component of electromagnetic fields as a parameter in the study being conducted under the direction of Dr. Ray Cartwright and Dr. David Grant for the United Kingdom co-ordinating centre for cancer research, established by her Department in April 1991.

Mr. Sackville: The United Kingdom co-ordinating committee for cancer research—UKCCCR—is entirely independent of the Government. However, I understand that exposure to electromagnetic fields is one of the hypotheses that the UKCCCR study is considering. The study is being conducted under the direction of Sir Richard Doll. The hon. Member may wish to write to the UKCCCR secretary at PO Box 123, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3PX for details.

Community Treatment Orders

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to bring forward proposals for amending the Mental Health Act 1983, to allow for community treatment orders.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) on 13 January at column *731*.

Cycling

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures her Department has taken to promote the benefits to health of cycling.

Dr. Mawhinney: The promotion of physical activity is a major component of the national "Look After Your Heart"—LAYH—coronary prevention programme. LAYH has supported many local physical activity projects, including cycling events, but it is important to stress that cycling is only one of a range of physical activities beneficial to health, including walking.

Following the "Health of the Nation" White Paper, we are setting up a task force to develop strategies for further encouragement of physical activity.

Core Grants

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether regional and national organisations can apply for core grants under section 64 funding; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Yes. A core grant may be awarded under the section 64 general scheme to assist with the central administrative costs of a national, or regional, voluntary organisation. Such a grant will not normally be awarded for more than a maximum of five years under revised arrangements for funding from April 1993, detailed in my letter of August 1992 to voluntary organisations.

Applications are usually invited in the autumn for consideration for possible funding in the following financial year. A copy of the notes of guidance for 1993-94 setting out the detailed requirements, has been placed in the Library.

London Health Services

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hours were spent by Professor Tomlinson and his team on *(a)* site visits and *(b)* discussion in committee in connection with (i) University College hospital and Middlesex hospital and (ii) St. Bartholomew's hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: No record was kept of the time spent by Sir Bernard and his team on site visits or in committee discussion.

Babies

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many babies were born by Caesarean section in hospitals in *(a)* England and *(b)* the United Kingdom during each year since 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The estimated figures for England and Wales for the years 1973 to 1981 and for England for the years 1982 to 1985 and 1988-89 to 1990-91 are shown in the table. These figures related to deliveries and not to the number of babies born.

There are no data available for the years 1986 to 1987-88, and the data prior to 1973 cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost. Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland, and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Year	*Estimated number of deliveries*	*Estimated number by Caesarian section*	*Percentage by Caesarean section*
1973[1]	623,600	32,760	5·3
1974[1]	602,360	34,030	5·6
1975[1]	574,040	34,620	6·0
1976[1]	560,710	36,720	6·5
1977[1]	529,720	39,130	7·4
1978[1]	553,290	41,620	7·5
1979[1]	588,920	49,830	8·4
1980[1]	604,100	54,600	9·0
1981[1]	574,670	53,420	9·3
1982[1]	574,620	58,110	10·1
1983[1]	578,300	58,370	10·1
1984[1]	586,110	59,140	10·1
1985[1]	605,120	63,270	10·5
1988-89[2]	642,000	64,000	10·0
1989-90[2]	643,000	77,000	12·0
1990-91[2]	660,000	86,000	13·0

Source:
[1] Hospital In-Patient Enquiry.
[2] Hospital Episode Statistics (These are broad estimates based on incomplete data, and are rounded to the nearest 1,000).

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of deaths per thousand live births in each regional and district health authority area in *(a)* 1982, *(b)* 1987 and *(c)* 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The infant mortality rate—deaths under one year per 1,000 live-births—for each regional and district health authority for 1982 and 1987 are listed in the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publications "Local authority vital statistics 1982" and "Key population and Vital Statistics 1987" series VS Nos. 9 and 14 respectively; copies of which are available in the Library. The information requested for 1992 is not yet available.

Selected Drugs List

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she now expects the advisory committee on NHS drugs to make its recommendations in relation to the possible extension of the selected drugs list.

Dr. Mawhinney: I understand that at its meeting earlier this month the advisory committee on national health service drugs decided to set up sub-groups to undertake preliminary consideration of the range of drugs within each of the therapeutic categories to which the provisions of the selected list scheme are being extended. I also understand that the committee decided the order in which it would then itself consider drugs in the new categories, but that it has not set dates for the reviews of particular categories.

Health Expenditure

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was health expenditure as a proportion of gross domestic product, discounting capital receipts and associated income, for the years 1979 to 1993, inclusive.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in the table.

United Kingdom NHS expenditure as a percentage of GDP

Year	Net[1] expenditure as a percentage of GDP
1978-79	4·6
1979-80	4·5
1980-81	5·1
1981-82	5·3
1982-83	5·2
1983-84	5·1
1984-85	5·1
1985-86	4·9
1986-87	4·9
1987-88	4·8
1988-89	4·8
1989-90	4·8
1990-91	5·0
1991-92	5·4
[2]1992-93	5·8

[1] Excludes all income from charges and receipts.
[2] Estimate.

Childless Couples

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessments are available for the number of childless and infertile couples in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Sackville: It is not possible to make a reliable assessment from the information held centrally. Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has made of the number of small residential care homes eligible for registration after April.

Mr. Yeo: None. Registration under the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 is a matter for local authorities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates he has made of the resourcing implications for local authorities of the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991.

Mr. Yeo: The fees payable to local authorities by those running small homes are intended to meet authorities' registration costs under the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for *(a)* the North Worcestershire health authority and *(b)* Highfield hospital the number of (i) hospital beds and (ii) acute hospital beds in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table. The figures refer to North Worcestershire district health authority, as the health authority responsible for the Highfield hospital.

Average daily number of available beds, North Worcestershire 1989-90 to 1991-92

	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Bromsgrove and Redditch			
Total	724	655	614
Acute	351	346	341
General and acute	445	433	436
Kidderminster and District			
Total	836	803	730
Acute	219	221	205
General and acute	357	357	344
Highfield Hospital			
Total	63	61	n/a
Acute	63	61	n/a
General and acute	63	61	n/a
Alexandra Hospital			
Total	390	386	n/a
Acute	274	271	n/a
General and acute	318	315	n/a
Bromsgrove and Redditch acute unit (Highfield Hospital and Alexandra Hospital			
Total	453	446	409
Acute	337	332	328
General and acute	381	376	372

n/a = not available.

GP Fund Holders

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fund-holding practices, in each region, had exhausted their budget allocation for non-urgent hospital treatment by 1 February.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

ENVIRONMENT

Road Building (Recycled Materials)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the use of recycled materials in road construction in other European countries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 22 February 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

We do not keep detailed statistics about the use of recycled materials in road construction in other European countries. However, the amount used is known to vary depending on the availability of indigenous materials and land for disposal of waste materials. From our involvement in the preparation of European standards for highways, we are aware of the likely inclusion of requirements for the use of recycled materials.

TRANSPORT

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest state of negotiations necessary to secure his approval to the commencement of work on the London Underground Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 8 February.

Minibuses

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the differences between safety regulations applying to cars and those applying to minibuses.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 lay down the requirements for the construction of all vehicles. Specific requirements for the construction and use of minibuses include provisions on the number of doors and on their operation and access, as well as on the size of seats. There are also other minor requirements on such things as the lighting of steps to ensure passenger safety. Minibuses must also carry a first aid kit and fire extinguisher.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Government will fund research on the kinds of injuries inflicted on children in coach and minibus accidents.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have no plans to conduct such research at present. Statistics indicate that injuries to children travelling in minibuses represent less than 0·01 per cent. of all road casualties. We believe, therefore, that our resources would be better targeted on areas where potential benefits, including those to children, are greater.

Drink Driving

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the national budget for the 1992 Christmas drink and drive campaign; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the campaign.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The departmental budget for the 1992 Christmas drink drive campaign was £1·3 million. The bulk of this went into production and airing of a television commercial. Bus back, bus shelter and other posters were also produced for road safety officers and police who gave considerable support at a local level to the campaign.

I am pleased with the way the campaign was received and believe it was very effective in reminding people of the Department's message that "Drinking and Driving Wrecks Lives'. It thus contributed to reducing death and injury on the roads.

Results of research commissioned by the Department are not yet available. However, a recent survey by one marketing magazine showed that the drink drive campaign was recognised by 83 per cent. of males under 35 years of age and by 92 per cent. of males between 35 and 44 years of age.

Highway Authorities

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each local highway authority in England the bid for total capital expenditure for 1993-94 in their 1992 TPP—transport policies and plans—submission and the level of expenditure approved by the Government in each case.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The figures are given in the table.

Transport Supplementary Grant Settlement 1993-94

Authority	*Total Bid for Capital Expenditure £k*	*Gross Approved Spending £k*
City of London	4,430	2,252
Barking and Dagenham	5,426	2,805
Barnet	3,839	1,476
Bexley	8,358	6,758
Brent	5,889	2,401
Bromley	8,520	5,800
Camden	8,552	4,372
Croydon	9,424	6,574
Ealing	8,940	3,990
Enfield	11,976	6,713
Greenwich	3,525	1,943
Hackney	8,151	2,907
Hammersmith and Fulham	8,859	3,200
Haringey	7,607	3,496
Harrow	15,603	13,652
Havering	2,801	1,389
Hillingdon	16,220	13,099
Hounslow	10,470	5,691
Islington	9,470	2,595
Kensington and Chelsea	2,299	1,752
Kingston upon Thames	7,726	2,773
Lambeth	4,088	1,296
Lewisham	10,398	8,643
Merton	4,564	2,830
Newham	18,603	10,347
Redbridge	6,728	2,253
Richmond upon Thames	2,240	1,288
Southwark	5,492	5,140
Sutton	8,330	2,733
Tower Hamlets	17,984	9,050
Waltham Forest	4,304	2,873
Wandsworth	12,738	5,810
Westminster	12,833	5,370
Bolton	7,544	3,885
Bury	4,346	1,985
Manchester	39,676	27,080
Oldham	18,129	8,867
Rochdale	3,500	2,062
Salford	13,438	3,589
Stockport	6,660	4,639
Tameside	7,881	3,349
Trafford	11,047	5,276
Wigan	6,790	1,798
Knowsley	25,431	22,670
Liverpool	7,500	4,779
St. Helens	8,797	5,000
Sefton	5,629	2,077
Wirral	6,737	4,886
Barnsley	8,451	5,035
Doncaster	11,363	7,232
Rotherham	6,219	3,408
Sheffield	52,921	26,819
Gateshead	6,225	2,637
Newcastle upon Tyne	11,953	7,304
North Tyneside	3,459	1,683
South Tyneside	3,737	1,890
Sunderland	12,180	5,287
Birmingham	53,162	38,651
Coventry	16,444	14,015
Dudley	14,644	10,622
Sandwell	13,344	5,719
Solihull	4,604	3,732
Walsall	28,770	22,579

Authority	Total Bid for Capital Expenditure £k	Gross Approved Spending £k
Wolverhampton	26,087	18,508
Bradford	13,189	6,686
Calderdale	7,024	2,886
Kirklees	18,228	8,934
Leeds	39,557	22,675
Wakefield	9,839	4,319
Avon	33,124	22,061
Bedfordshire	14,170	7,673
Berkshire	28,680	12,741
Buckinghamshire	12,298	6,935
Cambridgeshire	25,709	10,598
Cheshire	37,190	25,909
Cleveland	20,432	15,169
Cornwall	21,155	11,678
Cumbria	16,398	8,520
Derbyshire	16,233	8,370
Devon	22,924	13,158
Dorset	14,250	7,897
Durham	19,499	13,204
East Sussex	25,977	10,481
Essex	29,147	16,605
Gloucestershire	13,496	9,101
Hampshire	49,751	42,546
Hereford and Worcester	13,002	5,326
Hertfordshire	22,472	17,926
Humberside	25,145	21,049
Isle of Wight	4,910	3,259
Kent	102,584	75,296
Lancashire	43,907	22,083
Leicestershire	26,419	12,340
Lincolnshire	22,538	10,735
Norfolk	38,396	18,595
Northamptonshire	20,546	10,537
Northumberland	14,904	11,515
North Yorkshire	34,466	23,183
Nottinghamshire	26,889	12,883
Oxfordshire	21,026	11,790
Shropshire	18,709	6,933
Somerset	19,214	14,235
Staffordshire	25,000	15,164
Suffolk	32,548	11,986
Surrey	49,910	34,019
Warwickshire	10,751	5,539
West Sussex	22,284	8,986
Wiltshire	10,119	4,309

Mr. Fry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each local highway authority in England the bids for 1993-94 made in their 1992 TPP submission for transport supplementary grant on *(a)* major road schemes, *(b)* minor works on local safety schemes, *(c)* structural maintenance on roads and *(d)* structural maintenance on bridges, and the grant awarded in each of those areas.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The figures are given in the table. Transport supplementary grant is a block grant payable at a rate of 50 per cent. of an authority's total accepted expenditure.

Transport supplementary grant settlement 1993-94

	Major road schemes		Local safety schemes		Structural maintenance of carriageways of principal roads		Assessment, strengthening and other structural maintenance of bridges	
Authority	Bid £ thousands	Accepted £ thousands	Bid £ thousands	Accepted £ thousands	Bid £ thousands	Accepted £ thousands	Bid £ thousands	Accepted £ thousands
City of London	1,293	0	104	50	0	0	1,910	1,696
Barking and Dagenham	3,234	734	360	290	1,072	867	350	288
Barnet	0	0	693	390	200	140	135	130
Bexley	5,371	4,921	416	300	1,245	847	330	297
Brent	745	0	920	390	410	287	980	611
Bromley	3,821	3,6	305	280	600	420	300	207
Camden	0		775	400	2,125	1,566	2,620	1,634
Croydon	3,500	3,5	840	490	2,116	1,480	129	90
Ealing	1,523	1,5	530	290	407	285	395	392
Enfield	6,525	3,5	409	370	386	270	1,980	1,235
Greenwich	895	0	336	200	731	510	405	355
Hackney	1,334	1,334	543	244	1,908	385	163	147
Hammersmith and Fulham	0	0	2,675	500	600	420	1,445	1,000
Haringey	1,301	371	411	300	1,418	1,270	797	688
Harrow	13,195	12,310	250	230	0	0	830	747
Havering	0	0	430	200	129	90	767	647
Hillingdon	10,384	10,334	1,650	690	240	170	650	450
Hounslow	5,082	4,305	1,406	244	309	215	310	270
Islington	0	0	2,195	440	1,050	730	310	274
Kensington and Chelsea	974	974	350	200	0	0	331	298
Kingston upon Thames	1,516	856	407	210	924	563	605	425
Lambeth	0	0	177	90	1,075	255	1,030	190
Lewisham	7,162	7,162	503	390	210	50	326	200
Merton	1,932	1,238	460	390	200	140	152	95
Newham	6,667	5,324	940	350	200	140	3307	3237
Redbridge	0	0	681	350	1,092	765	357	223
Richmond upon Thames	0	0	527	290	214	111	565	546
Southwark	4,068	4,068	942	390	0	0	175	125
Sutton	2,194	577	609	330	394	170	775	620
Tower Hamlets	450	0	2,867	380	7,484	6,995	771	491
Waltham Forest	1,228	1,167	985	390	590	415	150	100
Wandsworth	1,960	610	1,275	790	1,000	503	3,340	2,943
Westminster	1,974	974	485	380	685	480	4,200	2,665
Bolton	1,202	1,002	358	184	1,150	1,015	2,160	1,098
Bury	20	0	250	209	900	630	600	570
Manchester	25,010	17,861	1,000	705	1,900	1,330	3,499	3,048

Authority	Major road schemes		Local safety schemes		Structural maintenance of carriageways of principal roads		Assessment, strengthening and other structural maintenance of bridges	
	Bid £ thousands	Accepted £ thousands	Bid £ thousands	Accepted £ thousands	Bid £ thousands	Accepted £ thousands	Bid £ thousands	Accepted £ thousands
Oldham	5,053	3,855	689	394	995	775	3,495	2,806
Rochdale	0	0	250	220	500	315	1,000	923
Salford	8,377	47	903	584	1,333	940	815	765
Stockport	1,385	1,385	330	186	550	350	2,515	2,289
Tameside	1,250	735	300	244	1,845	[illegible]	599	373
Trafford	4,920	4,010	325	205	419	290	164	158
Wigan	1,250	320	415	130	579	370	500	384
Knowsley	20,550	20,400	436	274	950	860	464	386
Liverpool	2,450	1,700	1,000	320	1,500	1,500	650	555
St. Helens	7,373	4,157	61	61	227	160	250	192
Sefton	815	0	310	259	780	550	775	598
Wirral	2,095	2,095	570	464	510	360	1,494	1,349
Barnsley	3,805	3,345	708	400	800	565	565	469
Doncaster	5,195	2,915	740	420	1,793	1,421	1,662	1,578
Rotherham	3,023	2,323	536	99	617	522	110	85
Sheffield	17,360	17,360	700	400	3,260	2,711	4,346	3,941
Gateshead	1,652	1,300	477	300	275	275	363	273
Newcastle upon Tyne	6,158	5,623	500	260	1,791	736	439	300
North Tyneside	300	0	451	50	1,200	840	608	340
South Tyneside	853	823	340	210	549	385	525	291
Sunderland	3,561	1,806	1,650	520	2,600	2,006	688	440
Birmingham	32,501	29,372	1,500	995	6,000	4,392	3,000	2,119
Coventry	11,966	11,614	545	350	1,181	825	861	734
Dudley	9,960	6,972	600	295	2,000	1,400	1,174	588
Sandwell	4,442	0	1,259	345	2,496	1,740	3,439	2,656
Solihull	3,070	2,990	472	335	160	120	270	194
Walsall	19,931	19,531	350	200	1,100	770	2,578	1,500
Wolverhampton	14,801	13,209	401	250	1,250	880	3,407	2,023
Bradford	3,552	1,843	1,270	500	3,000	2,100	1,500	945
Calderdale	2,934	0	458	299	1,717	1,277	1,294	904
Kirklees	1,199	1,143	1,001	700	4,040	3,510	2,075	1,294
Leeds	13,100	8,932	1,560	670	8,320	6,086	3,987	3,581
Wakefield	330	0	1,212	564	2,530	1,686	1,361	1,209
Avon	18,764	14,538	1,611	591	3,745	2,470	2,078	1,819
Bedfordshire	6,799	735	1,700	473	1,210	1,210	2,282	2,150
Berkshire	18,925	7,129	1,958	600	3,325	2,150	1,448	1,125
Buckinghamshire	2,866	1,100	636	563	2,745	2,190	769	611
Cambridgeshire	11,605	2,247	4,032	1,534	3,513	2,555	3,586	2,474
Cheshire	17,695	13,995	600	496	10,600	7,520	2,925	2,720
Cleveland	11,890	10,961	717	400	2,485	1,940	1,260	1,119
Cornwall	7,794	5,889	796	390	3,342	2,340	2,257	1,700
Cumbria	4,297	2,777	900	820	3,000	2,100	2,500	1,522
Derbyshire	4,300	4,300	1,100	330	2,590	1,810	1,530	1,276
Devon	9,943	4,347	1,362	830	6,510	4,040	2,097	1,500
Dorset	5,595	3,017	1,172	640	2,000	1,295	1,100	850
Durham	9,746	9,510	500	270	2,272	1,255	1,600	1,200
East Sussex	12,704	4,579	740	505	3,178	1,963	1,940	1,776
Essex	13,741	8,566	2,623	1,478	3,603	2,588	2,594	1,729
Gloucestershire	7,443	5,384	1,693	477	2,004	1,500	803	700
Hampshire	34,974	31,044	1,708	1,120	7,620	4,985	2,133	1,225
Hereford and Worcester	3,994	1,306	1,226	355	2,900	2,030	1,031	685
Hertfordshire	12,240	11,240	2,150	1,119	4,100	2,870	2,490	2,045
Humberside	10,897	10,403	936	650	5,218	3,856	2,400	1,961
Isle of Wight	0	0	250	220	750	600	300	187
Kent	65,071	54,681	6,670	1,045	12,210	7,879	2,200	1,701
Lancashire	20,879	9,956	1,711	1,108	3,196	2,160	8,466	5,873
Leicestershire	11,628	6,714	1,343	609	2,455	1,915	1,224	896
Lincolnshire	9,811	3,810	2,748	441	2,313	2,027	2,900	2,207
Norfolk	18,913	4,282	2,946	790	5,438	3,542	5,623	4,786
Northamptonshire	7,838	3,179	2,223	890	5,570	3,800	1,893	1,394
Northumberland	4,224	3,749	750	460	3,000	2,210	5,150	4,480
North Yorkshire	15,947	12,664	1,276	700	6,539	4,575	3,686	2,875
Nottinghamshire	5,251	3,738	1,049	773	5,339	3,530	2,882	2,101
Oxfordshire	7,016	7,016	4,990	503	2,172	1,833	1,310	1,115
Shropshire	8,298	1,431	644	365	2,500	1,750	2,775	2,130
Somerset	10,859	10,221	550	300	2,618	1,733	1,389	1,120
Staffordshire	9,203	4,977	825	565	7,150	5,420	1,610	1,410
Suffolk	12,165	463	1,120	789	4,769	3,050	3,230	2,340
Surrey	28,962	21,570	3,585	968	4,974	2,712	6,270	4,765
Warwickshire	830	245	2,985	960	1,500	1,050	3,460	2,462
West Sussex	5,506	4,577	1,964	520	2,812	1,738	700	671
Wiltshire	2,839	1,328	1,014	524	2,209	1,292	215	185

Organ Donors

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce organ donor consent to driving licences; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and I have agreed that such a facility will increase the chances of identifying a potential donor quickly. This will be of great benefit in saving others' lives.

Therefore, from today, 1 March, driving licences issued by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency will include an organ donor consent section in the counterpart of the licence. Licence holders will be able to complete this section voluntarily in the same way as they can complete a separate organ donor card at present. Holders of existing licences will not need to exchange them if they wish to become organ donors. They should complete and carry a separate donor card, available widely from doctors, health clinics, hospitals and Department of Health offices.

Airport Security

Mr. Prescott: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether United Kingdom airport security screening of all hold baggage, with full physical baggage reconciliation, will be required only for US international flights.

Mr. John MacGregor: No. The proposals for 100 per cent. hold baggage screening, and for accounting and authorising hold baggage for carriage, will apply to all international flights from this country.

M1-M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes in vehicles per day are expected, resulting from proposals for an M1-M62 link road *(a)* yellow route and *(b)* purple route, for junctions 38 to 39 of the M1.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The yellow route option is forecast to increase traffic on the M1 between junctions 38 and 39 by about 8,000 vehicles per day in the opening year and the purple route to reduce traffic by about 31,000 vehicles per day.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessments of the cost factors have been undertaken for changes in traffic volume between junctions 38 and 39 of the M1, within proposals for an M1-M62 link road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The cost factors have been assessed by predicting the carriageway provision that would be required where the traffic flow is forecast to change from the level of normal growth, as a result of the route options for an M1-M62 link road.

Buses, London

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the cost recovery ratio between farebox income, revenue apportionment from Travelcard, bus pass, retired persons and staff passes, and revenue subsidy, from block grant or through tendering arrangements for London bus routes W7, 43 and X43.

Mr. Norris: This information is commercially sensitive.

Salvage Working Group

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has had the opportunity to consider the report of the salvage working group entitled "Meeting Future Salvage Needs"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department is currently considering the report, but has not yet reached firm conclusions on it.

Aircraft

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will list those dispensations to the normal regulations that have allowed aircraft to fly supersonically over the Bristol channel area in the past six months;

(2) if he will set out the rules that govern the circumstances in which aircraft are allowed to fly supersonically in areas near to the British mainland.

Mr. Norris: Supersonic flight by civil aircraft over any part of the United Kingdom is prohibited and there is no procedure for dispensations. Sonic booms from inbound aircraft are sometimes heard on land. This occurs in certain meteorological conditions, mainly during winter. These are known as secondary booms and may be propagated from aircraft many miles from land. Both British Airways and Air France have co-operated in making operational changes in the winter to reduce the disturbance from secondary booms. Although they cannot eliminate the phenomenon, British Airways' Concordes decelerate to fly subsonic 105 nautical miles west of Coombe Martin in Devon; Air France routes its Concordes further south of the United Kingdom.

EMPLOYMENT

Alternative Employment

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what was the total sum of moneys made available in each year since 1989-90 to assist former employees of defence-related industries in Hampshire in finding alternative employment;

(2) what is the total sum of moneys her Department is planning to make available in each of the years 1992-93 to 1994-95 to assist former employees of defence-related industries in Hampshire in finding alternative employment.

Mr. McLoughlin: Currently these figures are not available in the form requested and it is not foreseen that they will be.

Restart

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have taken part in Restart interviews in this and each preceding year; in each year how many then got jobs; and how many of those were in work six months later.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 1 March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the number of people who have taken part in Restart interviews and the number of people who started work as a result of their interview. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The information you asked for is given in the attached table. Unfortunately, I am unable to provide details of the number of clients who are still in employment six months after leaving the unemployment register. To do so would involve the use of expensive tracking mechanisms at a disproportionate cost.

As you will appreciate, the figures I have given reflect only the *direct* results of Restart. We do not know how many people subsequently take up a job or a place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview. It is through this support which advisers give clients in reviewing their options for returning to work that Restart has its effect.

An indication of the degree of that effect is provided by the report "The Restart Effect" which was recently published by the independent Policy Studies Institute in 1992. It is based on an analysis of the largest survey of unemployed people in the UK since 1986. This showed conclusively that the programme had a major effect in reducing the time it takes people to leave unemployment, to get a job and to enter Employment Training, particularly for those people who were at a disadvantage within the labour market.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the *Official Report*. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Restart interviews and job placings
Operational year 1986-87 to January 1993

	Restart interviews	*Job placings*
1986-87	1,285,097	7,243
1987-88	2,248,016	10,916
1988-89	2,029,500	12,387
1989-90	1,509,703	18,439
1990-91	1,362,831	19,066
1991-92	1,995,030	21,185
April 1992-January 1993	1,933,999	28,063
TOTAL	12,364,176	117,299

Job Interview Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people went on the job interview guarantee scheme in this and each preceding year; and in each year how many people completed the scheme, how many went into employment from the scheme and how many were in employment six months later.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 1 March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the Job Interview Guarantee (JIG) initiative. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The information we are able to give you is set out on the attached table which records the numbers of people assisted and the numbers of people who were placed directly in work through JIG.

We do not collect statistical information on how many people completed the JIG initiative or on how many people who went into employment from the scheme were in employment six months later. To do so would necessitate expensive mechanisms at a disproportionate cost.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Job interview guarantee
September 1989 to January 1993

	People assisted	*People placed*
[1]1989-91	19,632	5,324
1991-92	134,296	39,960
April 1992-93	159,285	63,603
Total	313,213	108,887

[1] From September 1989 to March 1991 JIG was piloted in 20 inner city areas only.

Unemployment, Southampton

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list those wards in which the ratio of unemployed claimants to registered electors is lower than in the Bargate, Southampton, ward for *(a)* wards included in areas to be assisted by city challenge projects, *(b)* wards covered by inner city task forces, *(c)* wards covered by city action teams and *(d)* wards wholly or partly covered by urban development corporations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is not held centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Job Clubs

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have taken part in job clubs in this and each preceding year; in each year, how many got jobs at the end; and how many of those were still in work six months later.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 1 March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about Jobclub statistics. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The statistics for the number of people who have taken part in Jobclubs (throughflow) and the number who have got jobs (job entries) are detailed in the attached table. Figures are given from 1985-86, which was the first year for which national statistics were collected.

We do not collect information on the number of people who were still in work after six months. To do so would require expensive tracking mechanisms at a disproportionate cost.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Jobclub
Operational year 1985-86 to January 1993

	Throughflow	*Job entries*
1985-86	1,994	1,267
1986-87	20,606	12,364
1987-88	105,677	57,080
1988-89	132,262	71,495
1989-90	140,095	72,977
1990-91	134,712	65,498
1991-92	176,140	76,831
1992-93[1]	180,173	80,446
Total	891,659	437,958

[1] April 1992 to January 1993.

St. David's Day

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to make 1 March a bank holiday in Wales.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are currently consulting on changing the May Day bank holiday and hope to announce a decision shortly. However, we have no plans to make 1 March—St. David's day—a bank holiday in Wales.

Chartists Day

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to promote the declaration of Chartists day, 4 November, as a bank holiday in Wales.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have no plans to promote the declaration of Chartists day as a bank holiday in Wales.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Benefit Statistics

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants without dependent children during the year 1991-92 received *(a)* unemployment benefit, *(b)* statutory sick pay, *(c)* sickness benefit, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* severe disablement allowance, *(f)* widow's pension, *(g)* industrial injuries disablement benefit and *(h)* invalid care allowance, where no income support was also in payment.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Table 1: 1991-92—Estimated numbers of people receiving benefits at any one time

Benefit	*Recipients*
Unemployment Benefit	555,000
Statutory Sick Pay	330,000
Sickness Benefit	110,000
Invalidity Benefit	1,306,000
Severe Disablement Allowance	293,000
Widows' Pension	284,000
Industrial Disablement Benefit	200,000
Invalid Care Allowance	136,000

Table 2: 1991-92—Recipients of benefit where Income Support is also in payment.

Benefit	*Recipients*
Unemployment Benefit	103,000
Statutory Sick Pay	7,000
Sickness Benefit	26,000
Invalidity Benefit	112,000
Severe Disablement Allowance	172,000
Widows' Pension	26,000
Industrial Disablement Injuries Benefit	12,000
Invalid Care Allowance	42,000

Sources:

Table 1—Surveys of benefits at March 1991, except unemployment benefit which relates to May 1991 and Statutory Sick Pay which is the 1991-92 estimate provided in the Departmental Report 1993.

Table 2—Income Support Annual Statistical Enquiry May 1991.

Notes:

1. The figures in Tables 1 and 2 have been rounded to the nearest thousand.

2. Table 2 shows the number of recipients of each benefit who also receive Income Support either as claimant or as a partner of an Income Support claimant.

Housing

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances persons aged 16 and 17 years not in receipt of income support would be eligible for housing benefit.

Mr. Burt: Housing benefit is available to 16 and 17-year-olds who live independently and are not following a full-time course of higher education, whether or not they are in receipt of income support if they have a commercial liability to pay rent and are unable to meet their housing costs.

Rent Deposits

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision exists in the social fund for the payment of rent deposits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The fund does not provide help with rent deposits.

War Pensions

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received regarding the cessation of war pension to those suffering under 20 per cent. disablement due to service-related noise-induced deafness; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: Some 120 representations have been received.

Pensioner Households

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the number of pensioner households which do not claim *(a)* housing benefit and *(b)* income support to which they would be entitled.

Mr. Burt: The latest available figures on take-up of housing benefit and income support can be found in "Income Related Benefits—Estimates of Take Up in 1989" published on 11 January 1993, copies of which are in the Library.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if payments will be made from the independent living fund in cases where attendance allowance claims, successful after appeal, predate the closure date for independent living fund applications; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: There are no plans to do so.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security to how much the figure of £35, above which there is abatement of unemployment benefit for occupational pensioners, would have increased to have kept pace with *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* earnings since it was fixed at that level; how many people received (i) no unemployment benefit and (ii) reduced unemployment benefit because they have an occupational pension exceeding £35 per week at the most recent available date; and what would be the (1) gross cost and (2) net cost of abolishing this rule.

Mr. Burt: The limit of £35 per week was introduced in April 1981. If it had been increased in line with increases in *(a)* the retail prices index and *(b)* earnings between April 1981 and April 1992, the present limit would be £65 and £84 respectively.

The table shows the numbers of people whose unemployment benefit is abated because they receive an occupational or personal pension exceeding £35 per week.

Unemployed claimants whose unemployment benefit is reduced or extinguished due to receipt of an occupational or personal pension exceeding £35 per week

	Thousands
Unemployment benefit reduced	17·2
Unemployment benefit extinguished	9·2

Notes:
1. *Source:* Half Yearly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants.
2. No separate figures are maintained of recipients of occupational and personal pension.

The gross cost of abolishing the abatement rule is estimated to be £40 million a year at 1992-93 prices. It is estimated that the net cost will not differ significantly from this figure.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received *(a)* no and *(b)* reduced unemployment benefit because a spouse's occupational pension is treated as earnings for the purposes of earnings rules for unemployment benefit in the most recent available period; and what would be the (i) gross and (ii) net additional cost of abolishing that treatment of a spouse's occupational pension.

Mr. Burt: The personal rate of unemployment benefit is unaffected by a spouse's occupational pension. Adult dependency increases—ADIs—of unemployment benefit are extinguished when a spouse's earnings, including any occupational pension, exceed £26·20 a week. Information on the number of ADIs extinguished in this way is unavailable and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The cost of excluding occupational pensions from the earnings rule is therefore impossible to estimate.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations he has received concerning the disclosure of medical evidence associated with unsuccessful applications for disability living allowance; what consultations he has had with claimants' organisations, citizens advice bureaux and welfare rights lawyers in relation to current practice in dealing with such requests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: No such representations have been received nor consultations held.

Residential Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements he has made to ensure that registration authorities are advised of which small homes eligible for registration after April have residents receiving income support or residential allowance towards the cost of their care.

Mr. Burt: No such arrangements are necessary. The social security benefits paid to residents living in small homes have no bearing on the registration process.

Retirement Pension (Women)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances a woman aged 60 years or more is not entitled to the basic retirement pension; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: A woman of 60 who has paid insufficient national insurance contributions will not be entitled to the basic retirement pension in her own right. If she is married she will be entitled to a retirement pension on her husband's contributions provided that he is 65 and has taken his pension. If her marriage has terminated she may still use her former husband's contributions to gain a pension. A widow of pensionable age may also receive a retirement pension based on her late husband's contributions.

National Insurance

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the effect on Treasury revenue in 1993-94 and in a full year of raising the upper earnings limit for national insurance in line with average earnings rather than prices; and how many employees would pay extra national insurance as a result.

Miss Widdecombe: If the upper earnings limit for national insurance was raised in line with average earnings

to £425 per week from April 1993, the additional revenue both in 1993-94 and in a full year would be about £50 million. Some 3 million employees would pay up to 45p per week extra in contributions.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the effect on Treasury revenue in 1993-94 and in a full year of *(a)* abolishing the 2 per cent. national insurance contribution, *(b)* raising the lower earnings limit to the level of the personal tax allowance and *(c)* both *(a)* and *(b)* combined.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is in the table. The reduction in the full year cost at *(b)* reflects the savings in respect of personal pensions rebates and incentives paid after 1993-94. For the purposes of this calculation the personal tax allowance has been increased by the latest Treasury assumption of 2·6 per cent. over the 1992-93 level.

	Cost(−)/Yield(+) 1993-94 (£ billion)	
	In year	*Full year*
(a) Abolishing the two per cent. national insurance contribution	−0·9	−1·0
(b) Raising the lower earnings limit to the level of the personal tax allowance	−0·5	−0·4
(a) Part *(a)* and *(b)* combined	−1·6	−1·6

Note: Figures in *(c)* have been rounded and are therefore not the sum of the figures in *(a)* and *(b)*.

Pension Age

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if, on the basis of assumptions used in "Options for Equality in State Pension Age", he will publish figures estimating the cost of reintroducing earnings uprating for the retirement pension and other linked benefits beginning in April 1996, giving annual figures in 1992-93 prices over a 10-year period.

Miss Widdecombe *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* The table shows estimates of the cost of introducing earnings upratings with effect from April 1996 for retirement pensions and linked benefits—widow's pension, widowed mother's allowance, invalidity pension as well as unemployment and sickness benefits paid to those over state pension age. The consultation document on options for equality in state pension age assumes an annual increase in earnings of 1·5 per cent. greater than prices and this assumption has been used to derive the extra cost.

Year	*Extra cost (£ billion in April 1992 prices)*
1996-97	0·5
1997-98	1·0
1998-99	1·5
1999-00	2·0
2000-01	2·5
2001-02	3·0
2002-03	3·5
2003-04	4·0
2004-05	4·6
2005-06	5·1

Note: Estimates derived from estimates underlying Tables 13 and 14 of the "National Insurance Fund Long Term Financial Estimates —Report of the Government Actuary on the Second Quinquennial review under Section 137 of the Social Security Act 1975", published in July 1990 (HoC 582).

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Pesticides

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the farm or cattle pesticides which have been banned in the United Kingdom during the last three years.

Mr. Soames: Since 1989 a total of 70 pesticide products have been banned in the United Kingdom. Of these 27 contained the active ingredient captafol, 26 organomercury compounds, 11 aldrin, four DNOC, and one each for pentachlorophenol and dieldrin.

Ewe Premium

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy not to reduce the level of less-favoured area supplement under the ewe premium scheme without increasing the level of hill livestock compensatory allowance.

Mr. Curry: Headage payment rates under the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme will continue to be set in the light of all relevant factors.

Milk Marketing

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to distribute the facilities and services of the former milk marketing board to milk marketing co-operatives other than Milk Marque.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Bill would enable each milk marketing board to submit formal proposals to Ministers for the transfer and distribution of its assets. Ministers would decide whether to approve those proposals in accordance with the provisions of the Bill as enacted.

Minister's Home (Security)

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when and where the cost of providing security accommodation at his home was recorded in the departmental accounts; and if it was annotated for the attention of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Mr. Gummer: It is not in the public interest to disclose or aid the identification of security arrangements relating to public figures. Details of such expenditure do not in any event require separate annotation in departmental accounts.

Rabbit Diseases

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contingency plans there are to ensure sufficient supplies of vaccine would be available to cope with a sudden outbreak of either myxomatosis or viral haemorrhagic disease in rabbits.

Mr. Gummer: We have been in close contact with representatives of vaccine manufacturers, along with those

of rabbit owners, to explore the possibility of vaccine supplies being made available. As a result, a vaccine against myxomatosis is expected to be licensed early in March, although it is likely to be May before the company is able to make supplies widely available. There is no current licence application for a vaccine against rabbit viral haemorrhagic disease, but a possible application is under active discussion.

Linseed

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to seek inclusion of linseed in the EC arable regime from 1993; what base year for set-aside he believes to be justified; what proportion of the total EC linseed crop is currently grown in the United Kingdom; whether these proposals will be the subject of majority voting in the Council of Agriculture Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The European Commission's price-fixing proposals include the addition of linseed to the list of crops eligible for aid in 1993 under the arable area payments scheme, which includes provisions for set aside. The timing of this proposal takes no account of farming practice, and causes considerable difficulties for linseed producers. I am therefore opposing it.

In 1992, the United Kingdom area sown to linseed was approximately 60 per cent. of the EC total. The proposals for linseed have been made in the context of the Commission's annual price-fixing proposals, subject to qualified majority voting.

Milk Levy

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will give the detailed calculations for each year since the inception of the additional milk levy system setting out how the total guaranteed quantity, including Northern Ireland's share of the Community reserve, was allocated among all the United Kingdom's regions.

Mr. Curry: The allocation of quota between regions is based on the total quantity of quota awarded to individual producers in those regions. Detailed figures are set out in the table. Figures for the 1992-93 quota year will not be available until after the quota year end. Direct sales quota is not allocated between United Kingdom regions.

Regional wholesale quota (kilogrammes)

Region	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
1. England and Wales and the Isles of Scilly	12,878,001,000	12,744,955,000	12,726,215,000	11,936,516,000	11,619,077,095	11,856,892,344	11,832,511,254	11,611,833,155
2. Northern Ireland	[1]1,290,810,000	[1]1,280,049,000	[1]1,300,643,000	[1]1,251,404,000	[1]1,218,098,483	[1]1,258,854,873	[1]1,256,552,496	[1]1,238,306,511
3. The area to which the Scottish Milk Marketing Scheme (Consolidation) Approval Order 1989 applies, other than region 4	1,081,267,000	1,070,096,000	1,067,700,000	1,001,515,000	974,842,494	990,789,710	990,796,432	970,883,931
4. The Islands of Arran, Bute, Coll, Gigha, Great Cumbrae Islay, Little Cumbrae, Islay and Kintyre south of Tarbert	57,561,000	56,966,000	57,644,000	54,231,000	53,174,164	57,830,473	57,830,473	56,890,212
5. The area to which the Aberdeen and District Milk Marketing Scheme Approval Order 1984 applies	116,784,000	115,578,000	115,219,000	107,819,000	104,924,685	108,257,648	108,261,439	107,806,994
6. The area to which the North of Scotland Milk Marketing Scheme 1934 (as amended) applies, other than the Islands of Orkney	44,900,000	44,436,000	44,630,000	41,510,000	39,843,762	40,355,023	40,355,023	40,545,002
7. The Islands of Orkney	15,454,000	15,294,000	15,332,000	14,711,000	14,453,852	15,634,190	15,634,190	17,047,617
8. The Islands of Shetland	2,223,000	2,200,000	2,191,000	2,094,000	2,146,036	2,354,455	2,354,454	2,303,275
United Kingdom Total	15,552,000,000	15,394,574,000	15,394,574,000	14,474,800,000	14,091,560,571	14,396,058,716	14,369,295,761	14,110,616,697

[1] Plus 65,000,000 from the Community Reserve.

Fish Imports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his policy towards French proposals for *(a)* a temporary ban on fish imports into the EC and *(b)* minimum import prices.

Mr. Curry: The EC Commission, having consulted the fisheries management committee on 25 February, is adopting a measure requiring the price at which imports of certain species of white fish enter the Community to be equal to or above the reference price. I consider this to be a measured and balanced response to the current market problems.

Fish Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research he has done to establish the relative contribution of *(a)* consumer resistance, *(b)* seasonal factors and *(c)* imports, on depressing market prices for fish.

Mr. Curry: The Department maintains a close watch on the state of the fish market and the factors which influence it, but their relative importance varies over time and cannot be quantified precisely.

WALES

Coal Mines (Water Pollution)

11. **Mr. Gareth Wardell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money his Department has allocated to the Welsh Development Agency for the last five years for the purpose of treating rivers and streams in Wales polluted by abandoned coal mines.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Individual reclamation schemes can include work to contain sites and prevent contamination from spreading. Planned spending in 1993-94 is some £32,000,000 to reclaim around 1,200 acres.

Manufacturing Plants

12. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many new manufacturing plants have been opened and are now in production in Wales since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: There are 803 manufacturing plants, employing over 56,000 people, which are still in production, having opened since 1979.

Quangos

13. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his policy for appointments to quangos.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I seek to appoint those who are best suited to each post.

Exports

14. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he is taking within the Principality to encourage the development of exports.

Mr. David Hunt: I recently announced a new export drive to help small and medium-sized Welsh companies which includes a substantially increased programme of overseas trade missions and a trade fair representative service for Welsh companies.

Committee of the Regions

15. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will announce the mechanism for selection of Wales's representation at the EC Committee of the Regions.

Mr. David Hunt: The question of United Kingdom representation on the Committee of the Regions is currently being considered.

Valleys Initiative

16. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the results of the valleys initiative launched by his predecessor in 1988.

Mr. David Hunt: I am currently engaging consultants to undertake an evaluation of the programme for the valleys, and I will publish the results in due course.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for an independent evaluation exercise on the valleys initiative.

Mr. David Hunt: I am currently in the process of engaging independent consultants to undertake an evaluation of the programme for the valleys.

Cardiff Wales Airport

17. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to secure improved road and rail links to Cardiff Wales airport.

Sir Wyn Roberts: These are matters for South Glamorgan county council, as highway authority, and British Rail respectively.

Welsh Vineyards

18. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hectolitres of *(a)* table wine and *(b)* quality wine were produced from Welsh vineyards in each of the last three years.

Mr. David Hunt: No quality wine has been produced, but 131 hectolitres of table wine were produced from vineyards in Wales in 1989; 202 in 1990; and 147 in 1991.

Further Education (Grants)

19. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will bring forward proposals to ensure *(a)* the same formula to provide adequate funding for individual maintenance grants and *(b)* the same qualifying criteria, for awards for further education students in each of the counties of Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. Local education authorities are responsible for making mandatory student awards in accordance with the relevant regulations. They receive 100 per cent. funding from central Government for such awards.

In contrast, LEAs provide support for discretionary awards from their own resources and it is for them to decide which students and courses to support and how much to spend. We believe that policy in this area is best decided locally.

Wage Levels

20. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to raise average Welsh wage levels.

Mr. David Hunt: Wages are a matter for agreement between employees and employers in the light of their particular circumstances.

Since May 1990 wage levels have risen faster in Wales than in Great Britain as a whole—16·7 per cent. in Wales, 15·8 per cent. in Great Britain—and real earnings have increased for all income groups in Wales since 1979.

Secondary Schools (Expenditure)

21. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent for pupils in secondary schools in Wales in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79, at constant prices.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1990-91 current expenditure per pupil in secondary schools in Wales was £1,953. The equivalent constant price figure for 1978-79 was £1,433.

North-south Road Links

22. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his plans to improve road links between north and south Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Since 1979, over £180 million has been spent on improvements to the A470 and the A483. We have plans to spend a further £180 million including the major improvements shown in the 1993 supplement to "Roads in Wales".

Housing (Rural Areas)

23. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met representatives from *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* housing associations in rural Wales to discuss housing need and affordability in the rural areas of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I keep in close touch with rural housing matters. My officials are currently meeting every housing authority in Wales to discuss their housing strategies.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what action is undertaken to encourage energy conservation among pupils as part of the national curriculum in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The nature, use and conservation of energy is a part of the science order within the national curriculum. The technology order also requires pupils at key stage 4 to be taught

"to reduce energy loss and understand why this is important".

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of *(a)* local authority, *(b)* private rented and *(c)* owner-occupied houses in Wales currently have (i) loft insulation, (ii) hot water tank and hot water system lagging, (iii) cavity wall insulation, (iv) double glazing and (v) draught excluder systems.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available information is from the 1986 Welsh inter-censal survey and is shown in the table:

Households taking energy conservation measures, by tenure

	Percentage of applicable households[1] with:				
	Roof, loft insulation	*Hot watertank insulated*	*Cavity walls insulation*	*Windows double glazed*	*Doors/windows draught stripped*
Local authority	81·0	74·0	10·1	2·4	26·7
Private rented	53·5	67·2	6·8	9·2	18·6
Owner-occupied	80·4	85·1	13·6	39·1	39·2

[1] Those households for which it was actually possible for the conservation measure to have been carried out.
Source: Welsh Inter Censal Survey, 1986.

Self-employed People

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the percentages of self-employed people within each local authority area in Wales; and what proportion of self-employed people in each of those areas are involved directly in agriculture.

Mr. David Hunt: The percentage of self-employed people aged 16 and over in each local authority area in Wales is shown in the table. Information on self-employed people involved in agriculture will be included in part 2 of the 1991 census county report series—Nos. CEN91 CR 47-54 cover Wales—which are due to be published by HMSO between March and July 1993. Copies of these reports will be placed in the Library of the House.

Percentage of self-employed persons aged 16 and over, 1991

	Per cent.
Alyn and Deeside	5·9
Colwyn	9·7
Delyn	7·3
Glyndwr	12·2
Rhuddlan	7·1
Wrexham Maelor	6·1
Carmarthen	14·9
Ceredigion	15·4
Dinefwr	12·1
Llanelli	5·6
Preseli Pembrokeshire	12·3
South Pembrokeshire	11·4
Blaenau Gwent	3·8
Islwyn	4·6
Monmouth	10·1
Newport	5·3
Torfaen	4·5
Aberconwy	10·2
Arfon	7·9
Dwyfor	13·8
Meirionnydd	13·7
Ynys Mon-Isle of Anglesey	9·2
Cynon Valley	4·4
Merthyr Tydfil	4·2
Ogwr	5·4
Rhondda	4·2
Rhymney Valley	4·5
Taff-Ely	5·7
Brecknock	13·2
Montgomeryshire	15·8
Radnor	17·8
Cardiff	5·5
Vale of Glamorgan	6·7
Lliw Valley	5·5
Neath	4·8
Port Talbot	3·4
Swansea	5·4

Source: OPCS 1991 Census County Report Series Part 1.

School Governors

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to amend regulation 21 of the Education (School Government) Regulations 1989 to ensure that members of the public who are not current school governors are entitled to attend a school governors meeting as observers only on a strictly one-off basis.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No. The 1989 regulations already allow for anyone who is not a member of a governing body to seek the approval of the governing body to their attendance at any particular meeting of that governing body.

Bus Engines

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what financial incentives are currently provided by his Department to encourage bus companies to install new cleaner engines.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Government's observations on the fifth report of the Transport Select Committee, Session 1990-91—House of Commons paper 102 of Session 1991-92.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the percentage of those that have been unemployed for 26 weeks or longer in each Welsh county in January of each year since 1984.

Mr. David Hunt: Unemployment data can be accessed from the NOMIS database by House of Commons Library staff.

Earnings

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the average gross weekly earnings of full-time workers in each Welsh county in each year since 1985 expressed as a percentage of the United Kingdom average gross weekly earnings of full-time workers.

Mr. David Hunt: Comparisons with United Kingdom averages are not readily available. The table gives the figures as a percentage of the Great Britain average.

Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees[1] as a percentage of the Great Britain average

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Clwyd	95·1	93·0	94·0	89·7	89·8	90·0	88·9	89·2
Dyfed[2]	89·9	86·7	86·8	83·0	85·5	83·7	83·0	82·3
Gwent	93·2	92·3	92·9	90·5	88·5	86·1	88·0	86·5
Gwynedd	92·8	89·0	88·3	85·8	89·8	85·7	86·5	85·2
Mid Glamorgan	91·2	90·7	91·5	90·9	91·8	88·5	87·8	88·9
Powys	88·4	86·8	85·8	83·4	86·0	79·9	79·7	82·6
South Glamorgan	97·2	96·7	94·4	93·0	93·6	93·2	93·2	92·6
West Glamorgan[3]	95·1	92·8	93·6	91·4	89·0	87·6	89·1	92·3
Wales	93·8	92·2	92·2	89·9	90·1	88·2	88·6	88·9

[1] Employees on adult rates whose pay for the survey period was not affected by absence.
[2] Excluding Llanelli.
[3] Including Llanelli.
Source: New Earnings Survey.

Ecotec Research

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the recommendations of the report by Ecotec Research on socio-economic conditions in the south Wales valleys.

Mr. David Hunt: This report, together with a range of other material, is being considered in the discussions that are taking place within the context of my Department's structural funds review working group for industrial south Wales into the future use of these resources in the area from January 1994 onwards.

Farm Business Survey

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cattle and sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales have taken part in the farm business survey in each year since 1979; and what was their average hectarage.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of cattle and sheep farms in the severely disadvantaged areas in Wales which have been included in the farm business survey since 1979 and the average hectarage per farm are as follows:

	Number of Farms	*Average Hectarage*
1979-80	131	133
1980-81	130	135
1981-82	121	138
1982-83	112	127
1983-84	109	123
1984-85	93	123
1985-86	97	135
1986-87	118	140
1987-88	120	156
1988-89	128	152
1989-90	129	151
1990-91	138	154
1991-92	112	138

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many specialist sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales have taken part in the farm business survey in each year since 1979; and what was their average hectarage.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of sheep farms in the severely disadvantaged areas in Wales which have been included in the farm business survey since 1979 and the average hectarage per farm are as follows:

	Number of holdings	*Average hectarage*
1979-80	25	339
1980-81	26	315
1981-82	32	262
1982-83	30	277
1983-84	51	244
1984-85	47	263
1985-86	44	261
1986-87	50	277
1987-88	53	268
1988-89	63	264
1989-90	63	254
1990-91	60	307
1991-92	72	227

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many livestock farms in disadvantaged areas in Wales have taken part in the farm business survey in each year since 1979; and what was their average hectarage.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of livestock farms in the disadvantaged areas in Wales which have been included in the farm business survey since 1985-86—the first year for which FBS data are available—and the average hectarage per farm are as follows:

	Number of Farms	*Average Hectarage*
1985-86	35	82
1986-87	47	76
1987-88	46	75
1988-89	43	78
1989-90	45	67
1990-91	50	68
1991-92	47	76

Livestock Farms

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cattle and sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales have *(a)* less than 50 hectares, *(b)* 50 to 100 hectares, *(c)* 100 to 150 hectares, *(d)* 150 to 200 hectares, *(e)* 200 to 250 hectares, *(f)* 250 to 300 hectares, *(g)* 300 to 350 hectares, *(h)* 350 to 400 hectares and *(i)* more than 400 hectares.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

Number of hill and upland (LFA) cattle and sheep holdings in the severely disadvantaged areas of Wales

Area of holding (hectares)	*Number of holdings*
Less than 50	2,349
50-99·9	1,109
100-149·9	473
150-199·9	164
200-249·9	73
250-299·9	36
300-349·9	23
350-399·9	12
400 and over	35

Source: June 1992 Agricultural Census

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the net farm income in real terms of cattle and sheep farmers in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The income figures in real terms—that is, deflated by the RPI 1991-92 equals 100—are as follows:

Severely disadvantaged cattle and sheep farms

	£
1979-80	9,493
1980-81	12,200
1981-82	13,632
1982-83	11,059
1983-84	10,391
1984-85	11,430
1985-86	12,734
1986-87	12,805
1987-88	16,436
1988-89	20,476
1989-90	12,507
1990-91	9,138
1991-92	13,457

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many livestock farms in disadvantaged areas in Wales have *(a)* less than 50 hectares, *(b)* 50 to 100 hectares, *(c)* 100 to 150 hectares, *(d)* 150 to 200 hectares, *(e)* 200 to 250 hectares, *(f)* 250 to 300 hectares, *(g)* 300 to 350 hectares, *(h)* 350 to 400 hectares and *(i)* more than 400 hectares.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

Number of Livestock[1] Holdings in the disadvantaged areas of Wales

Area of Holding (Hectares)	*Number of Holdings*
Less than 50	2,932
50—99·9	664
100—149·9	180
150—199·9	53
200—249·9	24
250—299·9	7
300—349·9	8
350—399·9	4
400 and over	7

Source: June 1992 Agricultural Census.
[1] Includes the categories Hill and Upland (LFA) Sheep, and Hill and Upland (LFA) Cattle and Sheep.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many specialist sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales have *(a)* less than 50 hectares, *(b)* between 50 and 100 hectares, *(c)* between 100 and 150 hectares, *(d)* between 150 and 250 hectares *(e)* between 250 and 300 hectares, *(f)* between 300 and 350 hectares, *(g)* between 350 and 400 hectares and *(h)* more than 400 hectares.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

Number of hill and upland (LFA) sheep holdings in the severely disadvantaged areas of Wales

Area of holdings (hectares)	*Number of holdings*
Less than 50	3,446
50—99·9	1,495
100—149·9	668
150—249·9	493
250—299·9	104
300—349·9	76
350—399·9	37
400 and over	170

Source: June 1992 Agricultural Census.

Youth Services

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what capital grants he is making available in 1993-94 to support voluntary youth services, village halls and community centre programmes; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how much money he made available in capital grants for voluntary youth services, village halls and

community centre programmes in each of the last five years; and how many schemes have been supported in each district council area in each of those years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Records are held on a county basis. The number of schemes approved are as follows:

	1988-89	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Clwyd	6	8	7	4	5
Dyfed	2	4	14	20	17
Gwent	13	8	4	7	9
Gwynedd	9	15	15	10	4
Mid Glamorgan	2	2	2	1	2
Powys	2	2	2	3	2
South Glamorgan	4	4	5	3	4
West Glamorgan	1	2	0	2	1
Grant outturn (£)	546,505	592,324	522,611	723,659	[1]551,000

[1] Provisional.

£0·522 million in grant aid will be available in 1993-94 to continue support of projects approved in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Departmental Successes and Failures

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list *(a)* the successes and *(b)* the failures of his period of office.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall be making a statement on the performance of my Department in the Welsh day debate today.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage hill livestock compensatory allowance payments have formed of net farm income in real terms on specialist sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The percentage of farm income represented by hill compensatory allowances on sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas of Wales in each year since 1979 is as follows:

Year	*Per cent.*
1978-79	49·8
1979-80	136·5
1980-81	85·6
1981-82	63·9
1982-83	95·8
1983-84	71·2
1984-85	64·5
1985-86	84·9
1986-87	75·5
1987-88	79·9
1988-89	46·2
1989-90	78·9
1990-91	87·2
1991-92	56·1

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage hill livestock compensatory allowance payments have formed of net farm income in real terms on cattle and sheep farms in disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures for the disadvantaged areas are available from 1985-86 following the designation of the disadvantaged areas in 1984. The percentage of farm income represented by hill compensatory allowances in each year since then is as follows:

	Per cent
1985-86	17·0
1986-87	39·6
1987-88	24·1
1988-89	12·8
1989-90	23·3
1990-91	69·2
1991-92	31·1

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the net farm income in real terms of livestock farms in disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: Income figures for the disadvantaged areas are available from 1985-86 following the designation of the disadvantaged areas in 1984. The income figures in real terms—deflated by the RPI 1991-92 equals 100—are as follows:

	£
1985-86	8,636
1986-87	4,286
1987-88	7,875
1988-89	12,941
1989-90	6,172
1990-91	1,676
1991-92	4,386

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage hill livestock compensatory allowance payments have formed of net farm income in real terms on livestock farms in disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The percentage of farm income represented by hill compensatory allowances on livestock farms[1] in the disadvantaged areas of Wales from 1985-86[2] is as follows:

	Per cent.
1985-86	17·0
1986-87	39·6
1987-88	24·1
1988-89	12·8
1989-90	23·3
1990-91	69·2
1991-92	31·1

[1] Also known as DA cattle and sheep farms.
[2] The first year that we have FBS data for DA farms.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 2 March 1993

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Languages Charter

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will specify the differences between *(a)* notification, *(b)* acceptance and *(c)* approval of the European charter for regional or minority languages.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Article 18 of the European charter for regional or minority languages provides that the charter will be subject to ratification, acceptance or approval by the member states of the Council of Europe and that such instruments are to be deposited with the secretary general of the Council of Europe.

Ratification, acceptance and approval are all ways in which a state indicates its consent to be bound by the treaty. They all have the same effect. Which method a state uses may reflect its domestic practice. But each method requires an instrument to be sent to the depositary specifying whether the state is ratifying, accepting or approving the charter.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which languages in the United Kingdom the Government are considering specifying under article 3 of the European charter for regional or minority languages.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We are still considering whether to sign the charter. That consideration is on the basis that it would apply to Welsh, Gaelic and Irish.

Armenia

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps the Government are taking in relation to the economic blockade of Armenia by Azerbaijan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The European Community made representations to the Turkish Government on 29 January, asking Turkey to allow the transit of fuel supplies to Armenia from third countries and to fulfil earlier commitments to provide electricity to Armenia. Also on 29 January the president of the United Nations Security Council issued a statement expressing concern at the situation in Armenia and urging all countries in a position to help to facilitiate the provision of fuel and humanitarian assistance to Armenia. The British Government associate themselves with these calls and have taken the same line in their bilateral dealings with Turkey and Azerbaijan.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the continued economic blockade of Armenia by Azerbaijan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The President of Armenia has written to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, and several Armenian Ministers have written to their British counterparts, about the dire effects the Azerbaijani economic blockade has had on Armenia. We have in recent months made nearly £700,000 available for relief work in Armenia and the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The European Community has made a 38 million ecu loan for food and medicines available to Armenia and is considering further emergency humanitarian aid.

Macedonia

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made on the application by Macedonia for admission to the United Nations; and what is his policy on moves to reach an early decision.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Macedonia's application for admission to the United Nations has now been circulated. The three EC members of the Security Council—United Kingdom, France and Spain—have put forward a draft resolution with the aim of securing Macedonia's early admission on terms acceptable to all parties. The president of the Security Council is consulting the Greeks and the Macedonians.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the British Government's policy on United Nations resolution 789 on Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We support the United Nations Secretary-General's mission of good offices and the Security Council resolutions, including 789, aimed at resolving the Cyprus dispute. We welcome the agreement by all parties to resume talks, and will continue to work for progress and help the Secretary-General.

Departmental Officers (Travel)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officers travelled first class to their posts abroad in the last year because of *(a)* their grade and *(b)* operational reasons.

Mr. Goodlad: In the 12 months to January 1993, 13 officers travelled first class from London to their posts abroad or returned to London from their posts abroad. One officer travelled first class by virtue of his grade, and 12 for operational reasons.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many diplomatic service officers travelled first class to posts abroad in the last year; at what cost; and in how many cases the families of such officers travelled in first class.

Mr. Goodlad: In the 12 months to January 1993, 13 diplomatic service officers travelled first class from London to their posts abroad, or returned to London from their posts abroad, and the total cost was £25,046. Nine officers were accompanied by their families, who also travelled first class: the total cost of the family fares was £18,697. In addition, private secretaries and advisers accompanying Ministers, and officers of the rank of deputy under-secretary or above may travel first class on duty journeys.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many return air tickets, per year, and of what class, are allocated to diplomatic service officers serving abroad for use by their dependants; and what is the maximum number of tickets available to each family each year.

Mr. Goodlad: Dependants at post have the same entitlements as officers. The entitlement for return air tickets allocated to diplomatic service officers serving abroad for use by their dependants is related to the difficulty of the post, and there are basically three categories: the least difficult posts—62—where representational officers and their dependants serve for four years with one fare-paid leave, and non-representational officers for 30 months with no fare-paid leave; the intermediate category—51 posts—where officers serve for three years with one fare-paid leave after 18 months, and the most difficult posts—85—where officers serve for up to three years with a fare-paid leave after each 12 months of duty. For such mid-tour leave journeys, the class of travel is dependent on the time taken to fly to post. For journeys of less than two and a half hours economy class is used. For journeys over two and a half hours, business class. Very senior officers—those of the rank of deputy under-secretary or above—have an entitlement to travel in a superior class by virtue of their grade.

In addition, officers at most non-European posts—145—receive an extra economy class fare for each posting of at least three years, and in countries—55—with special difficulties, a contribution towards an annual short local trip outside the country of posting. The class of, and contribution towards, such journeys is based on economy class fares. Also, children at school in the United Kingdom may fly to post for three holidays per annum, by the cheapest possible means.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidance has been set, and when, regarding the type of air ticket to which diplomatic service officers and their families are entitled.

Mr. Goodlad: Her Majesty's Treasury's guidance regarding the type of air ticket was set in the "Civil Service Pay and Conditions of Service Code", recently superseded by the "Civil Service Management Code". It applies to all civil servants, including diplomatic service officers and their families. The last major revision of entitlements was in 1982 when new fare structures were introduced by the airlines.

In summary, all civil servants including diplomatic service officers, normally travel in economy class on journeys of up to two and a half hours. On official duty, and on transfer and mid-tour leave, they travel in business class on journeys over two and a half hours. On other leave journeys provided at the more difficult posts, they travel economy class. The same rules apply to the families of officers. Children who fly to post from school in the United Kingdom for the three main school holidays fly by the cheapest possible means. Very senior officers—those of the rank of deputy under-secretary or above—may sometimes travel in a higher class than those indicated above, by virtue of their grade or for operational reasons.

Training Courses

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff have attended courses at Hanslope Park in the last year; on which system Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff are trained at Hanslope Park; how many missions abroad use such systems; when such systems are being withdrawn worldwide; and when training courses for the new system will begin.

Mr. Goodlad: A total of 2,285 FCO staff have attended courses at Hanslope Park over the last 12 months. They are trained on many different systems in use at home and in 143 missions abroad. The main system being withdrawn is Piccolo HF radio. The last one is expected to go by the end of June 1993. Training on its replacement began in early 1992.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff have attended courses in Brackley, Northamptonshire, in the last year; and at what cost.

Mr. Goodlad: No FCO staff have attended courses at Brackley, but they have been accommodated there while attending communications courses in Buckinghamshire. The average cost is £64 per capita per night.

Mr. Abdul Qayum

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when an appeal application was received at the post in Islamabad from Mr. Abdul Qayum—Ref: IMM/B2588—who was refused entry clearance to join his wife in the United Kingdom; when the explanatory statement was dispatched; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This information is not available in London. I have asked the British high commission at Islamabad to provide the answer and I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office when it is received.

East Timor

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose to the United Nations that its special rapporteurs on torture pay an early visit to Indonesia to inquire into alleged violations of human rights in East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: A special rapporteur on torture visited East Timor in 1991. A further visit is for discussion between the rapporteur and the Indonesians.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will propose to the United Nations Human Rights Commission that it appoints a special rapporteur on East Timor.

Mr. Goodlad: We are currently discussing with our EC partners how to handle the East Timor issue at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. We do not believe that the situation in East Timor requires the appointment of a special rapporteur.

Ministers (Overseas Visits)

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent on facilities in United Kingdom embassies and high commissions in each of the last two financial years in connection with visits to these countries by the Prime Minister or other Ministers.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: To provide a full answer would involve disproportionate cost. Generally, overseas posts cope with such visits from within their own existing resources.

Mrs. Jahan Ara

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on the application made to the United Kingdom post in Islamabad by Mrs. Jahan Ara (Ref: B5808; DOB 4:11:71) to join her husband in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This information is not available in London. I have asked the British high commission at Islamabad to provide the answer and I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office when it is received.

Mr. Ghulam Murtaza

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on the application by Mr. Ghulam Murtaza—Ref: Gu 100/7157/TAH—to join his wife in the United Kingdom following the submission of further evidence requested by the United Kingdom post in Islamabad; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: This information is not available in London. I have asked the British high commission at Islamabad to provide the answer and I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office when it is received.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Child Maintenance Orders

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average weekly amount per child awarded to heads of lone parent families from maintenance orders in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not kept centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Roche (Abandoned Litigation)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much public expenditure was incurred in the abandoned litigation against the pharmaceutical company Roche; and if he will conduct an inquiry into the reason for this nugatory expenditure.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No part of the litigation which is being funded by the Legal Aid Board against the pharmaceutical company, Roche, has yet been abandoned. In the light of the statutory criteria under the Legal Aid Act 1988, some of the legally aided claimants have been sent letters informing them that their legal aid certificates may be discharged and inviting them to show cause why they should not be. There is a right of appeal against discharge. The generic expenditure on all the benzodiazepine drugs in the litigation amounts to approximatley £3 million, though further, as yet unquantified, costs have also been incurred. In view of the numbers of individual cases involved, these costs may be considerable.

TRANSPORT

Donaldson Inquiry

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the closing date for submissions to the Donaldson inquiry to enable considered responses from the people of Shetland and local coastal authorities to be submitted following the Shetland standard conference of 31 March to 1 April.

Mr. Norris: The conduct of the inquiry is entirely a matter for Lord Donaldson but I will draw the hon. Member's question to Lord Donaldson's attention.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will grant a sheriff's inquiry in to the sinking of the MV Braer so as to provide information to be considered by the Donaldson inquiry.

Mr. Norris: Under the Merchant Shipping (Accident Investigation) Regulations 1989, provision is made for investigations into serious marine accidents to take the form of an inspector's inquiry with a report to the Secretary of State by the chief inspector of marine accidents and subsequent publication. This is considered to be the appropriate form of investigation for this accident. However should the evidence being gathered by the inspectors suggest that a formal investigation before a sheriff is warranted then my right hon. Friend will consider ordering one.

Lord Donaldson has made it clear that his inquiry is not directed particularly at the Braer accident; however, such information as he needs on that accident will be provided by the chief inspector.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the capital investment required *(a)* to resignal the west coast main line and *(b)* to replace the power supply to the west coast main line; and how much money British Rail is allocating to these purposes.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to assess what capital investment is required to resignal the west coast main line and to replace the power supply. Exactly how much money British Rail will be allocating to these purposes, and over what period, will be decided in the spring, when British Rail has completed its next corporate plan.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how long the power supply and the signalling for the west coast main line were designed to last; and when they were installed south of Warrington.

Mr. Freeman: The west coast main line was electrified in the 1960s. Signalling south of Crewe was also replaced in the 1960s. North of Crewe, the signalling was modernised in the 1970s.

The details of the design lives of the various components are matters for BR: it is for it to judge what needs to be replaced when.

Ships' Sewerage Systems

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he will take to press for international regulations governing the installation and operation of ships' sewerage systems.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport has given full support to proposals submitted by the Department of Marine of the Republic of Ireland to the International Maritime Organisation to regulate the installation and operation of ships' sewage systems. I am advised that this item has been placed on the IMO work programme for completion in 1995.

Bilge Alarms

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those passenger ferries operating without bilge alarms.

Mr. Norris: There are no international requirements for passenger ferries to have bilge alarms. However, I am advised that those United Kingdom-registered passenger ferries that operate with certain machinery-space, watertight doors closed do have such alarms.

Shipping

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the desirability of oil tankers and other large ships sending out tracking signals while they are in British waters with the aim of ensuring that their routes minimise the potential environmental damage of an accident and consequent spillage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The International Maritime Organisation is addressing the provision of equipment to transmit tracking signals for all ships. The Department fully supports this work and is developing a research programme to assess various types of equipment and their potential benefits.

Bathing Beaches

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken in pursuance of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch recommendation of 1992 concerning provision of notices on all bathing beaches likely to be affected by the wash of shipping passing close to shore.

Mr. Norris: As it was not formal or addressed to a specific body or authority, the recommendation and a brief account of the incident from which it stemmed has been included in the MAIB publication "Summary of Investigations".

The MAIB will ensure that the local authorities concerned are informed well ahead of this year's bathing season.

Bus Services

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total route mileage of scheduled bus services in each local authority area in Cambridgeshire which were supported by a county council subsidy in each year since 1984.

Mr. Freeman: The information is not held centrally by the Department. This is the responsibility of the county council.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the total route mileage of scheduled bus services in each local authority area in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984.

Mr. Freeman: The information requested is not held centrally by the Department.

British Waterways Board

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that arrangements are made enabling British Rail privileged travel facilities, currently enjoyed by British Waterways Board employees and pensioners, to continue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* Powers are being taken in the Railways Bill to ensure that future passenger service operators may be compelled to provide such facilities on their services. This will ensure that the benefits for all those currently entitled can be protected.

WALES

Student Grants

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of vocational first degree subjects receive *(a)* mandatory grants and *(b)* discretionary grants.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Students on first degree courses, irrespective of subject, are entitled to a mandatory award provided they satisfy the personal eligibility criteria.

Students on first degree courses who do not satisfy the criteria for mandatory awards can apply to their local authority for a discretionary award. Local authorities are free to determine their own policies on discretionary awards.

Protection of Children

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has made to the Police Federation's submission to the inquiry on domestic violence in relation to giving courts powers to make short-term ouster orders for the protection of children.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None. This submission from the Police Federation was made to the Home Affairs Committee, which has not yet published its report.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales under what criteria the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station has been entered for the Wales tourist board's annual competition; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Nuclear Electric submitted an entry on behalf of its visitor centres and station tours at Wylfa and Trawsfynydd in the "Best Newcomer" category. Under this category any tourism development, large or small, which has been completed in the last three years by either the public or private sector is eligible to be considered.

Renovation Grants

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received requesting minor works assistance under the renovation grant system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Requests for minor works assistance are made direct to the local housing authorities not to the Welsh Office.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the subject of the resources test for disabled facilities grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Since I announced changes to the test of resources for all grants, including disabled facilities grants last July, I have received a small number of representations.

Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the number of people in Wales currently living in areas where air pollution levels exceed European standards.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are European Community air quality limit values for lead, sulphur dioxide and particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide and ozone. Monitoring of these pollutants indicates that these standards are not being exceeded in Wales.

Care and Repair Cymru

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the Welsh Office circular detailing proposed changes in the renovation grant system as operated by Care and Repair Cymru; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No such circular has been issued by the Welsh Office. However, the Welsh Office has consulted interested bodies on draft regulations setting out new arrangements for the housing renovation grant scheme. A small number of comments were received in response.

Radon

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will provide figures for the levels of radon in dwelling houses in Clwyd and Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: It is not possible to provide the figures requested until the full results of the National Radiological Protection Board survey in Wales are known.

South Wales Valleys (Report)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the report by Ecotec Research on the socio-economic conditions in the south Wales valleys, commissioned by the standing conference on regional policy in south Wales, the South Wales training and enterprise councils and the Welsh Development Agency.

Mr. David Hunt: As the hon. Gentleman rightly indicates, this report has been commissioned by the standing conference on regional policy in south Wales, together with a number of other organisations, and in the circumstances it would be inappropriate for me to place a copy in the Library of the House.

Rural Problems

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends to visit the Meirionnydd Nant Conwy constituency to review rural problems; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no present plans to do so.

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received regarding funding arrangements by the Wales tourist board under section 4 of the Tourism Development Act 1969; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. An independent report recently published found the section 4 scheme operated by the Wales tourist board to be effective and worthy of continuation.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many general practitioner fundholders there are in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There are 26 general practitioner fundholders in Wales. A further 45 applicants, including three groups of two practices, are preparing to become fundholders from 1 April next.

Disabled People

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he is taking on the training and employment of disabled people; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: There are many initiatives taken locally by training and enterprise councils and by the Employment Service placing, assessment and counselling teams to improve access to training and employment opportunities for disabled people. I fully support all of these and am committed to the widest possible access for all to full participation in the labour market.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of schools which have held ballots on grant-maintained status; and how many of them are *(a)* Anglican and *(b)* Roman Catholic, listing in each category how many are (i) now operating as grant-maintained schools, (ii) have received approval for grant-maintained status, (iii) have published proposals and are awaiting a decision, (iv) have voted for grant-maintained status but not yet published proposals, (v) have had their proposals rejected and (vi) have voted against grant-maintained status.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Sixteen schools in Wales have balloted the parents of their pupils on the acquisition of grant maintained status. Of these one is an Anglican school and one a Roman Catholic. An application from the former is currently before me; the Roman Catholic school was incorporated as a grant maintained school on 1 January 1992.

Meirionnydd Nant Conwy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives are currently being pursued to enhance employment opportunities in the Meirionnydd Nant Conwy constituency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department, along with the Development Board for Rural Wales, the Welsh Development Agency, Targed and others, have in place very successful initiatives designed to create new jobs and safeguard existing ones. For instance, DBRW schemes alone have helped to create or safeguard over 800 jobs in the Meirionnydd area since 1979. The board is also developing a business park at Penrhyndeudraeth, which is expected to provide up to 750 jobs in premises totalling 250,000 square feet.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what efforts and initiatives have been pursued in the last 12 months to procure inward investment to Meirionnydd Nant Conwy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Office, Welsh Development Agency, Development Board for Rural Wales, Targed and local authorities continue to work strenuously to promote inward investment to Meirionnydd Nant Conwy. The Gwynedd marketing initiative has been formed to direct targeted marketing campaigns in the United Kingdom and overseas. Good results are being achieved and three inward investment projects have been recorded for the constituency over the past 12 months.

Development Board for Rural Wales

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to bring forward proposals to widen the remit of the Development Board for Rural Wales, by statute if necessary, to enable the board to assist existing businesses which are enduring difficult financial circumstances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no such plans. The Development Board for Rural Wales already has wide-ranging powers to assist businesses in Wales.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to bring forward proposals to widen the remit of the Welsh Development Agency, by statute if necessary, to enable the agency to assist existing businesses which are enduring difficult financial circumstances; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have no such plans. The Welsh Development Agency already has wide-ranging powers to assist businesses in Wales.

Regional Development Fund

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with Welsh local authorities and other infrastructure-providing bodies in relation to the levels of *(a)* base and *(b)* supplementary credit approvals and the effect of his 1993-94 settlements on applications for European regional development fund assistance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: These issues have been raised at meetings of the Welsh Consultative Council on Local Government Finance and its capital working group, which are the forums for discussions with local authorities on local government finance issues including capital provision. I chaired meetings of WCCLGF on 26 November and 12 January. The CWG, involving my officials and officers from local authorities, met on 11 January.

I have not had consultations on these issues with other infrastructure-providing bodies in Wales.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what response he has received from the European Commission to the proposal to include rural Wales in the list of areas with objective status for European regional development fund assistance.

Mr. David Hunt: The European Commission announced on 24 February their proposals for future objective 1 status which did not include rural Wales (Clwyd, Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys). I was extremely disappointed by its omission and will be raising this matter with Commissioner Millan when I meet him shortly.

Welsh Office Expenditure

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what effect functional changes have had for Welsh Office expenditure for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraph 1.13 of the 1993 departmental report for the Welsh Office (Cm 2215).

HIV

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of HIV sufferers there were in Wales in 1990-91, 1991-92 and at the latest available date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The cumulative totals of HIV positive cases reported in Wales as at 31 March 1991, 31 March 1992 and 31 December 1992 were 234, 279 and 302 respectively.

National Health Service Trusts

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total payment to chairpersons and members of NHS trusts estimated for 1992-93.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Full details of payments to chairmen and members of national health service trusts are not held centrally.

Trust chairmen receive remuneration between £15,125 and £19,285 dependent on the level of income of the trust. Each non-executive director receives remuneration of £5,000 per annum. In addition, travel and other expenses may be payable.

Costs associated with executive directors will be included in the accounts and annual report which each trust is required to make publicly available under the statutory obligation to hold an annual meeting.

Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total number of maintained *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools; in each case how many are (i) voluntary aided, (ii) voluntary controlled and (iii) grant-maintained; and how many in each category are Anglican, Roman Catholic, other denominational and non-denominational.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number, type and denomination of schools in Wales as at January 1992 is available from the publication "Statistics of Training and Education in Wales: Schools 1993", tables 3.06 and 4.05 for primary and secondary respectively. There were two grant-maintained secondary schools in January 1992, one was classified as voluntary Roman Catholic and the other was classified as county secondary. A further two schools have since become grant maintained, both of which were previously county secondary schools.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Litter

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions for depositing litter were brought in England and Wales during 1992.

Mr. Jack: In England and Wales in 1991, there were 1,450 prosecutions under the Litter Act 1983, section 1(3), and 223 prosecutions for depositing litter under section 87 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Information for 1992 will not be available until autumn 1993.

Yugoslavia (Refugees)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female refugees, from former Yugoslavia have been refused access into the United Kingdom over the past six months;

(2) how many *(a)* male and *(b)* remale refugees from former Yugoslavia, have been received into each of the countries of the European Community over the past six months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the six months July to December 1992 inclusive, around 4,600 nationals of the former Yugoslavia (excluding dependants) applied for asylum in the United Kingdom. Except for certain cases refused on safe third country grounds and under paragraph 101 of the immigration rules—detailed in the table—all these applicants are being allowed to stay while their application is under consideration. Comprehensive information on the gender of these principal applicants is not yet available but provisional data suggest that about 60 per cent. were male and 40 per cent. female.

In addition, as I announced to the House on 30 November 1992, we are willing to accept 1,000 ex-detainees from Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia, together with their dependants, totalling perhaps 4,000 in all. These ex-detainees are being identified for us by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; those identified so far are all male but are being accompanied, or will be joined, by their wives and children.

For information on total applications to other EC members states, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) on 18 February (column 297). The information is not available by gender.

Refusals of applications for asylum in the United Kingdom by nationals of the former Yugoslavia, excluding dependants, by gender, July to December 1992

	Total	*Male*	*Female*
Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination of the asylum claim	—	—	—
Refused on safe third country grounds[1 2]	13	11	2
Refused under paragraph 101 of immigration rules[3]	40	n/a	n/a

[1] Refused on grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.
[2] Breakdown by gender is of those removed on safe third country grounds, which corresponds in total, in this period, to those refused. A breakdown of those refused is not directly available.
[3] For failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to two invitations to interview to establish identity.
n/a not available.

Refugees

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* male and *(b)* female refugees, have been received into the United Kingdom over the last six months.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the period July to December 1992 inclusive, a total of around 15,000 persons (excluding dependants) applied for asylum in the United Kingdom. Comprehensive information on the gender of these principal applicants is not yet available but provisional data suggests that of the order of 70 per cent. were male and 30 per cent. female.

Offenders (Staffordshire)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders appearing before the courts in Staffordshire were unemployed in each year since 1987.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from the hon. Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) on 15 January 1993, column 826.

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research he has commissioned into the levels of juvenile crime and the extent of offending on bail by juveniles.

Mr. Jack: Information about the number of juvenile offenders is collected routinely by the Home Office and published annually in "Criminal Statistics". This information is supplemented by a number of research projects including a national self-report study of delinquency, initial results from which will be available this year.

No figures are held centrally on the extent of offending on bail by juveniles, but research is being undertaken into the bail process in five areas as part of the Home Office's work to reduce the level of offending on bail. This is expected to produce, inter alia, information about the level of offending by juveniles on bail.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had about measures that might be introduced to reduce juvenile crime.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave him on 21 January, at column 332.

Prostitution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what consideration he is giving to the proposals by the chief constable of South Yorkshire on prostitution; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what new initiatives he is currently considering to tackle the problems of prostitution in residential districts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government are aware of the difficulties which prostitution generally, and in residential areas in particular, can cause. I am also aware of the personal view of the chief constable of South Yorkshire on this subject.

The aim of the law in this area is to prevent the nuisance caused when prostitutes ply their trade in the streets; to discourage women from becoming prostitutes; and to penalise those who seek to encourage, control or exploit the prostitution of others for financial gain.

When a suitable legislation opportunity occurs we will amend the law on kerb crawling in section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 1985 to remove the need to prove persistence, annoyance or nuisance before a man can be convicted of the offence.

Refugees (Yugoslavia)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many refugees have been accepted into the United Kingdom from each of the states of the former Yugoslavia since the commencement of the recent conflicts.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In the period January 1992 to January 1993 inclusive, around 5,900 nationals of the former Yugoslavia (excluding dependants) have applied for asylum in the United Kingdom. The large majority of these applications are still under consideration and the applicants are being allowed to stay in the meantime. More detailed data on the origin of the applicants is not available.

In addition, as I announced to the House on 30 November 1992, we are willing to accept 1,000 ex-detainees from Bosnia and other parts of the former Yugoslavia, together with their dependants, totalling perhaps 4,000 in all.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement indicating the administrative procedures used by his Department to satisfy that the provisions of *(a)* section 5(4) and *(b)* section 5(5) of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 are being properly directed by those seeking permission to undertake experiments on animals; and how many experiments have been refused permission since the Act came into force.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* I will write to the hon. Member.

Police Batons

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what trials he has authorised of new batons for use by the police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed to the Metropolitan police's conducting trials of an expandable baton, subject to the outcome of a full scientific evaluation of its wounding potential. He has also agreed to their conducting trials of variants of the straight baton which can be carried covertly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Racial Hatred

Mr. Cox: To ask the Attorney-General what was the number of prosecutions for inciting racial hatred in *(a)* the Greater London area, *(b)* England and Wales, *(c)* Scotland and *(d)* Northern Ireland during the year 1992.

The Attorney-General: In 1992 there was one prosecution in England and Wales for inciting racial hatred. There were none in the Greater London area and none in Northern Ireland. I have no responsibilities relating to criminal prosecutions in Scotland.

Domestic Violence

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: To ask the Attorney-General what guidelines the Crown prosecution service has on prosecutions in cases of domestic violence.

The Attorney-General: The Crown prosecution service reviews all cases referred to it from the police in accordance with the principles set out in the code for Crown prosecutors issued in pursuance of section 10 of the Prosecution of Offences Act 1985. The evidential and

public interest criteria set out in the code apply to offences committed in "domestic" circumstances just as they do to any other prosecution.

The Crown prosecution service recognises that there are complex issues involved in prosecuting domestic violence cases and, in addition to the code, has issued internal guidance to its staff. This guidance, which is being updated, sets out in greater detail the factors which will be relevant to the review and prosecution of these cases. The relevant document will shortly be supplied to the Home Affairs Committee inquiry on domestic violence, and will thereafter be available in the Library of the House of Commons. It will also be made available to relevant interest groups.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Poisoned Carcases

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many incidents of poisoned carcases being left in the open have been reported to his officials since 1 January 1990; in how many cases prosecutions resulted; and whether he will in due course, inform the hon. Member for Taunton of the outcome of his inquiries into the death through poison of a pet dog at Stoke St. Gregory, near Taunton.

Mr. Soames: Since January 1990 in England and Wales, 63 incidents involving poisoned carcases have been reported to the department. During the same period, five such cases have resulted in successful prosecution of the offenders. I will write to the hon. Member about the case to which he refers when investigations have been completed.

Dairy Industry

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many people have been employed in the dairy industry in England and Wales in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Curry: My Department collects figures only for the farming part of the dairy industry. These are as follows:

Employment in dairy farming[1]
England and Wales

	Thousands
1983	116·6
1984	113·8
1985	107·9
1986	105·6
1987	99·4
1988	93·8
1989	90·5
1990	88·7
1991	86·7
1992	82·6

[1] Specialist dairy and mainly dairy farms: excluding minor holdings, which accounted for less than 5 per cent. of total agricultural employment (mainly from part-time working) when last surveyed in 1989.

Note: Part-tiome numbers have not been reduced to full-time equivalents.

Source: June Agricultural and Horticultural censuses 1983 to 1992.

Flooding

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the evaluation being made by his Department on the effectiveness of sea and river flood defences in the eastern counties after the floods of 20 February; and what changes he proposes to make to his policy, investment programme and evacuation procedures.

Mr. Curry: Our initial assessment is that both the flood warning arrangements and the coastal defences themselves performed well in the face of the events of 20/21 February, reflecting the substantial investment in coastal defences made by successive Governments and local agencies, as well as the professionalism of the emergency services and other organisations involved. Damage to coastal defences is estimated at a little under £2 million and this will be made good as a matter of urgency. A detailed appraisal is under way to ensure that any necessary improvements are made to procedures and that resources continue to be concentrated on areas of greatest need.

Group Marketing Grant

Mr. Bates: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to review the group marketing grant; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In the light of experience with the group marketing grant since its introduction last April, I have decided that we should carry out a limited review to simplify the rules of the scheme in order to make its operation more flexible. Industry organisations are being consulted on a series of proposals. It is intended that the changes should come into effect from 1 April. I have placed copies of the consultation document in the Libraries of the House.

Clenbuterol

Mr. Bates: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has for the surveillance for residues of clenbuterol; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Surveillance for residues of clenbuterol in meat is carried out under two complementary programmes. The first is the national surveillance scheme for residues in meat under which randomly selected samples are collected from slaughterhouses and from farms. The second, co-ordinated by the working party on veterinary residues in animal products, is directed at retail and wholesale premises. It covers both imported and domestic supplies of meat.

In 1992, 1,074 samples were taken in Great Britain and analysed for clenbuterol under both programmes. Two samples taken were found to contain clenbuterol, at concentrations of 0·4 µg/kg and 3·3 µg/kg respectively. Neither of these residues would have been likely to have posed any threat to human health, but one of them was above the United Kingdom's statutory maximum residue limit of 0·5µg/kg. It has not been possible to establish whether the samples found to contain clenbuterol originated in Great Britain or elsewhere, but under the NSS, which is confined to domestically produced animals and meat, no positives have been identified from samples taken in Great Britain since testing for clenbuterol began in August 1989.

Nevertheless, because of the evidence of abuse of clenbuterol outside Great Britain, we have concluded it would be prudent to step up our surveillance programme in 1993. Under the NSS some 1,335 samples will therefore be collected from randomly selected farms and slaughterhouses in Great Britain and tested for the presence of clenbuterol. This is 635 more than in 1992. Surveillance at retail outlets under the WPVR programme is similarly being extended in 1993. A total of 384 samples of ox and calf livers will be collected and tested for the presence of clenbuterol. This is 181 more than in 1992, but includes for the first time a check on calf liver.

A new sampling programme for imported meat will also commence in 1993. A total of 550 samples of imported bovine tissues are planned to be collected under this programme in the first year, compared with 175 in 1992, and these will also be analysed for residues of clenbuterol.

Comfrey

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if the safety assessment of comfrey has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Following the report of the working group on dietary supplements and health foods, Ministers asked the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment to review the safety of certain herbal substances, including comfrey, which had their medicinal licences withdrawn but which were still freely available as foods.

Comfrey contains toxic substances known as pyrrolizidine alkaloids. PAs belong to a large family of alkaloids, some of which are known to cause liver damage and induce tumors in laboratory animals. The COT considered that, although the toxicity data available on the particular PAs found in comfrey were limited, there was evidence that they could cause liver damage in animals and man. The committee therefore recommended that action should be taken to reduce the intake of comfrey and its potentially toxic constituents.

Comfrey and its products are on sale in four main forms. Tablets and capsules (made from roots or leaves) are the most concentrated form, and the Food Advisory Committee, to which the COT's findings were submitted for advice, recommended that the Government should seek the health food trade's agreement to early voluntary withdrawal of these products, backing it up with legislation. Roots are sold for use in poultices but may be used in making infusions; the FAC recommended labelling to warn against ingestion. Leaves are mainly intended for use in infusions, but many also be consumed directly, leading the FAC to recommend labelling to warn against the latter use. Finally, comfrey is also available in the form of herbal teas. Like the infusions of comfrey leaf, teas when brewed contain relatively low levels of PAs and the FAC did not consider any warning labelling to be necessary.

Comfrey preparations used externally are not a cause of concern, and were not considered by the Committees.

In considering these recommendations, the Government have taken account of the many representations that they have received in recent months from the general public, doctors and practitioners of alternative medicine urging that nothing should be done to restrict the availability of dietary supplements and health foods. We recognise the strong public support expressed for herbal products and supplements generally and acknowledge the force of the view that consumers should be allowed to choose these products if they so wish.

The Government have therefore considered very carefully whether the action recommended is proportionate to the potential problem. Nevertheless, the recommendations of the independent expert committees are clear and unambiguous, and we have concluded that they should in general be accepted.

Accordingly I have today met the health food trade and requested the immediate withdrawal from sale of comfrey tablets and capsules. The trade has confirmed that most firms have already decided not to maintain sales of these products, and endorsed the action proposed. Given voluntary agreement on withdrawal, we do not consider that regulations will be necessary. My officials are, however, informing the European Commission of the findings and the action taken, so that the Scientific Committee for Food can examine the matter from an EC standpoint.

In addition, I have asked the trade to consider effective labelling of comfrey root and leaves on the lines recommended, where these products are sold.

The FAC also recommended that an information note should be distributed via health food shops and consumer organisations to give wide publicity to its advice. I am asking for their co-operation in distributing a note which we have prepared. It will also be made available to other organisations, for example those that may include growers of comfrey.

I am grateful for the responsible, positive and practical reaction of the industry on this issue. I am writing simultaneously to the principal consumer organisations to notify them of the findings of the expert committees and the action being taken.

I am putting in the Library of the House copies of the Department's analysis of comfrey products, the advice of the COT and the FAC and the draft information note.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr. Burns: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes his Department intends to make in the testing of cattle for bovine tuberculosis in Great Britain.

Mr. Gummer: I have decided to extend the interval between tuberculosis tests for cattle herds. The majority of herds in Great Britain are tested once every three years. Most will now be tested once every four years.

The move follows outstandingly successful efforts by Agriculture Departments over many years to reduce confirmed cases of bovin tuberculosis in Great Britain to the present levels of below 0·1 per cent. of herds. In no way does it mean a lowering of our guard against the disease.

Cattle herds in the counties of the south-west of England where bovine tuberculosis is present at slightly higher levels will continue to be tested more frequently. This means that all herds in Cornwall, Gloucestershire and Avon will be tested at least once every two years, and some once a year. Most herds in Devon will be tested—as now—every three years. The situation in the south-west of England will be kept under close review.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the cost of the tuberculosis eradication scheme; what estimates he has made of savings

that can be achieved by the selective testing of cattle instead of the culling of badgers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Some £8 million per year is spent on testing and compensation for bovine tuberculosis. A comprehensive national testing programme for cattle already exists, including more frequent testing in high risk areas.

Poultry Flocks (Salmonella)

Mr. Spring: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on developments in relation to compensation for poultry flocks slaughtered on account of salmonella.

Mr. Gummer: The PCA has today reported to the House on a complaint referred to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir. R. Body) about the scheme of compensation payments introduced in 1989 for poultry flocks slaughtered on account of salmonella. I am grateful to the Parliamentary Commissioner for this report, which I have studied carefully.

The PCA criticises the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food for failing in 1989 to discharge the obligation to devise and implement a compensation scheme which complied with the requirements of the legislation. The Government accept that the original decision to discount the estimated value of the flock by 40 per cent. to reflect the taint of salmonella infection was shown, following an arbitration case the following year, to be incorrect, but I should emphasise, as the permanent secretary has done in his comments quoted in the report, that the legal advice available to Ministers was taken fully into account at every stage, and that the Government considered that they were acting properly at the time.

In late 1988 and 1989, the Government were faced with a sudden drop of 60 to 80 per cent. of the market for fresh eggs, leaving individual producers facing a very serious commercial crisis. The Government would have been open to severe criticism had they not moved quickly to restore the position. In fact, a whole series of measures were taken to combat salmonella in a very short time on the basis of the medical, veterinary and scientific advice to protect public health and restore consumer confidence. I must stress that these measures were welcomed by the Select Committee for Agriculture in its report of February 1989, and were again welcomed in a debate in the House on 21 February.

The Government are always under a duty to be careful with the use of taxpayers' money. There were those in the House and outside who argued that no compensation was appropriate in the case of egg producers. While this view was rejected by the Government, it was thought justifiable for compensation to be discounted to reflect the fact that the flocks concerned were tainted with salmonella and therefore had a reduced market value.

This principle, which was of course designed to protect public funds, was never rejected, although it was found that the Ministry should not have applied a standard reduction to take it into account, but rather should have calculated a specific figure for each case on the basis of the facts. When, following the arbitrator's finding in September 1990 and the further legal advice obtained, it became clear that the basis of compensation applied hitherto needed to be changed, this was promptly done.

The PCA criticises the Ministry's unwillingness to reveal the basis on which compensation was proposed. This exacerbated the pressure under which flock owners were put. The Government accepts this finding.

The PCA also questions the decision in November 1990 to regard as closed the cases of those flock owners who had accepted compensation on the basis of the 40 per cent. abatement without exercising their right to arbitration. In deciding not to adjust retrospectively the compensation payments settled before the change of policy took effect, the Government were acting on a clear legal principle. We were not unmindful of the interest of individual producers or the merits of particular cases, but we had to balance these against the need to be careful with the use of public funds.

While the position remains that the Government are under no legal liability, we have reflected on the PCA's findings and now accept his view that it would be all right in the circumstances to adjust the compensation paid to all the producers affected to reflect the arrangements subsequently put in place. We shall accordingly be making ex gratia payments on a basis which has been agreed with the PCA to all those owners who were compensated on the basis of the 40 per cent. discount between March 1989 and September 1990. The total cost will be some £600,000.

Horses (Protection)

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what guidance his Department gives on the welfare and protection of horses on farms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The state veterinary service monitors standards of welfare for all farm animals and is available to provide free advice to farmers on any aspect of farm animal welfare.

Milk Producers

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what steps he is taking to improve the position of milk producers.

Mr. Curry: Dairy farming is one of the most profitable sectors of British agriculture and the Government will continue to encourage its efficiency and profitability.

Animals (Transport)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures are in place to ensure that the EC directive on the transport of live animals is complied with.

Mr. Soames: Directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport is implemented in Great Britain by the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 which came into force on 1 January 1993. The order is enforced by local authority inspectors with support and advice as necessary from the state veterinary service—SVS—which also arranges for the inspection of all consignments of livestock transported to other member states. Local authority and SVS inspectors have wide powers to stop and detain consignments of animals and to make spot checks.

Enforcement in other member states is a matter for the authorities concerned. The directive provides for the European Commission to carry out inspections to ensure uniform application of the rules.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Monetary Union

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what supervisory powers over the Bank of England will be exercised by the European central bank under stage 3 of EMU if the British Government have announced their intention not to participate; and to what extent the provisions of the treaty requiring the Bank of England to be independent of government apply in these circumstances.

Mr. Nelson: According to the protocol to the Maastricht treaty on certain provisions relating to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the independence provisions of article 107 of the treaty would not apply if the United Kingdom had notified the Council that it did not intend to move to the third stage of economic and monetary union. Accordingly, there would be no obligation to make the Bank of England independent.

The bank would, however, be subject to limited obligations under the European systems of central banks protocol, notably as regards the collection of statistical information (article 5), the obligation not to provide debt finance to public entities (article 21), any outstanding obligations arising from the bank's participation in the operating procedures for the EMS (article 44 together with article 6.1 of the European Monetary Institute protocol) and its obligation to provide a minimal percentage, if required to do so by the general council of the European central bank, towards the operating costs of the ECB (article 48).

Retail Sales

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the percentage effect on the January retail sales figures of the number of Saturdays in January 1992 compared with January 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The retail sales index is an indicator of the average sales per week within standard four or five-week trading periods as opposed to calendar months. The trading periods for January 1992 and January 1993 both contained four Saturdays. The level of sales in January 1993 was not influenced by an increased number of Saturdays.

External Financing Limits

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which commercial organisations in which Government have a controlling or total ownership, do not have external financing limits.

Mr. Portillo: A list of the organisations subject to formal external finance limits appears in table 6 of the "Cash Limits 1991-92 Provisional Outturn" White Paper (Cm 2010). A number of others do not have formal external finance limits, but their external finance is controlled within the framework of the new public expenditure control total. These organisations are included in table 4.16 of the statistical supplement to the autumn statement (Cm 2219).

The following commercial bodies, in which Government have a controlling or total ownership, are not treated in either of the ways described above:

Central government trading bodies:
- Driving Standards Agency
- Export Credits Guarantee Department
- Forestry Enterprise
- Horserace Totalisator Board
- Housing Corporation
- Housing for Wales
- Industrial Training Boards
- Remploy Ltd

Other
- Bank of England
- British Broadcasting Corporation
- British Nuclear Fuels PLC
- Channel Four Television Corporation
- International Military Services
- Commission for New Towns and
- New Town Development Corporations in Scotland

Value Added Tax

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made on the effect on the expenditure of people on low incomes of extending VAT to cover all foods.

Sir John Cope: My right hon. Friend is aware of the effect that the extension of VAT to food would have on the expenditure of people on low incomes. However, the hon. Member will appreciate that it would be inappropriate for me to comment further in the period leading up the Budget.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what effect value added tax harmonisation will have on public transport fares; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Under the VAT rates agreement reached by EC Finance Ministers, to which my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary referred in his reply to the hon. Member on 15 December 1992 at column *138*, the United Kingdom retains the right to apply a zero rate to passenger transport. Any proposed change to that right would require the unanimous agreement of all member states.

Interest Rate Cuts

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he last met representatives of the four main clearing banks to discuss the question of interest rates cuts being passed onto their customers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor last met representatives of the four main clearing banks from 15 to 17 December and discussed with them the question of passing on cuts in the base rate to their business customers. He announced the outcome of those discussions and the results of a related study by the Bank of England in a reply to a question from the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 26 January 1993 at columns 623-25.

Bank Charges

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the percentage bank charges have risen by since April 1992.

Mr. Nelson: The levels of bank charges are not collected centrally and are a matter for the commercial judgment of the banks. The January 1993 Bank of England report on bank lending to smaller businesses found that between June 1991 and December 1992 the average increase in income from fees and charges was just over 5 per cent. A copy of the report can be found in the Library.

Manufacturing Output

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the percentage change in manufacturing output for each year since 1987.

Mr. Nelson: Indices of manufacturing output may be found on the CSO Databank which can be accessed by the House of Commons Library. Information is currently available for periods up to December 1992.

Privatisation

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to arrange the sales of British Coal, Caledonian MacBrayne, Channel Four Television Company, Commonwealth Development Corporation, Covent Garden Market Authority, English Industrial Estates Corporation and Welsh Fourth Channel Authority.

Mr. Dorrell *[pursuant to his reply, 23 February 1993, c. 558]:* There are no plans to sell Channel Four Television Corporation or the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority, which remain public corporations.

Debt Relief

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list, for each country receiving debt relief on current Trinidad terms, their projected debt service payments for each of the next three years.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 24 February 1993]:* The information requested is not available. The latest generally accepted source of published information on developing country debt (World bank debt tables 1992-93) is based on data collected up to the end of 1991. Since all but two of the 14 Trinidad terms restructurings so far agreed were concluded after the end of 1991, the projected repayments figures do not reflect the reduction in debt service provided by these agreements.

Trinidad terms allow for the equivalent of the cancellation of up to half the eligible debts consolidated under the agreements, and a commitment by creditors to consider the case for a reduction in the whole stock of eligible debt after a period of two to three years' proven financial and economic responsibility, under arrangements monitored by the IMF. In total, about US$ 1·5 billion will be forgiven under the terms of the existing agreements, and more will follow.

Tax Statistics

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average and marginal tax rate including income tax and statutory social insurance payments of a single person, a married couple and a family consisting of a married couple plus two children earning in total *(a)* half, *(b)* three-quarters, *(c)* average earnings, *(d)* 1·5 times, *(e)* twice, *(f)* three times, *(g)* five times and *(h)* 10 times average earnings, in each EC member state.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Information for 1992-93 relating to the United Kingdom is given in the table:

Income tax and national insurance contributions at multiples of average earnings
Single person

Multiple of average earnings[1]	*Amount of tax and NIC*[2] *£ per week*	*Tax and NIC as percentage of gross earnings*	*Marginal tax and NIC rate per cent.*
½	36·55	21·1	34
¾	65·96	25·4	34
1	95·37	27·6	34
1½	143·93	27·7	25
2	212·68	30·7	40
3	351·08	33·8	40
5	627·88	36·3	40
10	1,319·88	38·1	40

Married man (wife not earning)

Multiple of average earnings[1]	*Amount of tax and NIC*[2] *£ per week*	*Tax and NIC as percentage of gross earnings*	*Marginal tax and NIC rate per cent.*
½	28·29	16·4	34
¾	57·70	22·2	34
1	87·11	25·2	34
1½	135·67	26·1	25
2	199·45	28·8	40
3	337·85	32·5	40
5	614·65	35·5	40
10	1,306·65	37·8	40

[1] Average earnings are taken to be the average gross weekly earnings of full-time males on adult rates with pay unaffected by absence. These are estimated to be £346·00 per week in 1992-93 using the Government Actuary's Department assumption of 5¼ per cent. growth in whole economy underlying earnings over 1991-92 as published in the 1992 Autumn Statement.

[2] National Insurance Contributions are at the standard Class 1 rate for employees not contracted-out of the state additional (eanings related) pension scheme. The tax figures assume that no allowances or reliefs are available other than the standard allowances.

Similar information on the other EC member states is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Some of the information requested is, however, obtainable from "The Tax/Benefit Position of Production Workers 1988-1991" published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. A copy is available in the Library.

National Insurance

Ms. Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the estimated revenue yield in 1993-94, and what would be the full year effect, of abolishing the employee's national insurance upper earnings limit from October 1993.

Miss Widdecombe: I have been asked to reply.

If the upper earnings limit for employees' contributions were abolished from October 1993, we estimate that the additional revenue yield for the six months indicated in

1993-94 would be £1·2 billion and the full year effect would be £1·5 billion. About three million employees would have to pay extra national insurance contributions as a result.

HEALTH

Health Care

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the amount of funding per capita for health care in the last 10 years in Northumberland and Newcastle health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The allocation of funds to the district health authorities—DHAs—is a matter for the Northern regional health authority and detailed information is not collected centrally.

However, information which relates the expenditure of the DHAs to their resident populations is shown in the table.

The figures, which pre-date the national health service reforms, show the DHAs as providers of health care, and reflect patterns of local service provision and the effects of patient flows across health authority boundaries.

Revenue expenditure per head of population

	Northumberland district health authority	*Newcastle district health authority*
	pounds (cash)	*pounds (cash)*
1982-83	162	361
1983-84	172	385
1984-85	183	406
1985-86	193	431
1986-87	204	461
1987-88	220	514
1988-89	243	575
1989-90	257	626
1990-91	271	687

Sources:

(a) Annual accounts of the Northumberland and the Newcastle district health authorities.

(b) Mid-year estimates of resident population—1987-90 (Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys).

Notes:

1. The figures for the DHAs are based upon their total revenue expenditure on the services which they managed or accounted for in the relevant financial years.

2. Capital expenditure incurred by the DHAs and all expenditure incurred by the Northern RHA on behalf of the Northern region as a whole is excluded.

3. The population figures used make no allowance for people resident in particular districts who receive treatment in others. For consistency the population estimates employed are those based on the 1981 census.

Activity Rates

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the increase in activity rates, overall and by specialty, in each region in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what is the Department of Health estimate for the increase in activity by specialty in each region in 1992-93.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information about activity rates for the major specialties in each regional health authority is given in the table. Activity forecasts by district and specialty are not collected centrally.

Total finished consultant episodes (ordinary plus day case admissions), total all specialties and selected specialties

Specialty	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*Percentage change*
England			
All specialties	8,785,252	9,306,707	6
General surgery	1,252,832	1,300,343	4
Urology	291,582	333,963	15
Trauma and orthopaedics	652,157	688,099	6
ENT	340,271	366,123	8
Ophthalmology	219,897	247,987	13
General medicine	1,200,726	1,251,775	4
Paediatrics	1,051,000	1,061,201	1
Geriatric medicine	471,130	513,433	9
Obstetrics	927,845	949,502	2
Gynaecology	762,332	786,797	3
Northern Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	628,583	655,287	4
General surgery	98,285	99,348	1
Urology	24,837	24,648	−1
Trauma and orthopaedics	43,785	48,195	10
ENT	24,918	25,883	4
Ophthalmology	15,610	16,278	4
General medicine	101,230	104,346	3
Paediatrics	76,653	80,937	6
Geriatric medicine	28,160	30,859	10
Obstetrics	61,953	61,449	−1
Gynaecology	54,688	55,836	2
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	722,130	751,428	4
General surgery	100,833	108,683	8
Urology	29,196	29,847	2
Trauma and orthopaedics	54,898	54,389	−1
ENT	27,958	29,248	5
Ophthalmology	14,875	16,575	11
General medicine	94,580	85,410	−10
Paediatrics	63,674	66,853	5
Geriatric medicine	51,712	53,250	3
Obstetrics	83,632	82,461	−1
Gynaecology	65,258	69,874	7
Trent Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	809,186	858,823	6
General surgery	113,208	118,643	5
Urology	24,076	28,581	19
Trauma and orthopaedics	61,223	64,647	6
ENT	30,950	32,738	6
Ophthalmology	18,890	19,857	5
General medicine	114,822	126,300	10
Paediatrics	95,323	99,420	4
Geriatric medicine	47,547	53,965	13
Obstetrics	84,733	85,742	1
Gynaecology	76,470	76,020	−1
East Anglian Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	360,934	379,294	5
General surgery	50,822	51,661	2
Urology	12,274	16,864	37
Trauma and orthopaedics	27,329	29,203	7
ENT	15,703	16,334	4
Ophthalmology	9,604	10,231	7
General medicine	45,912	49,638	8
Paediatrics	43,533	41,569	−5
Geriatric medicine	23,803	26,006	9
Obstetrics	36,456	38,387	5
Gynaecology	31,403	33,073	5
North West Thames Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	536,203	576,714	8
General surgery	75,230	76,830	2
Urology	18,508	18,131	−2
Trauma and orthopaedics	37,312	40,984	10
ENT	17,636	19,998	13
Ophthalmology	11,869	14,484	22
General medicine	63,279	70,175	11
Paediatrics	67,271	64,990	−3
Geriatric medicine	28,626	33,287	16

Specialty	1990-91	1991-92	Percentage change
Obstetrics	61,716	62,876	2
Gynaecology	44,972	48,594	8
North East Thames Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	695,279	746,633	7
General surgery	98,229	101,162	3
Urology	28,755	32,318	12
Trauma and orthopaedics	48,897	51,550	5
ENT	30,385	31,202	3
Ophthalmology	11,463	13,644	19
General medicine	95,804	92,551	−3
Paediatrics	88,401	77,902	−12
Geriatric medicine	35,407	37,865	7
Obstetrics	74,790	93,489	25
Gynaecology	71,251	72,818	2
South East Thames Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	629,250	673,068	7
General surgery	90,816	91,713	1
Urology	25,336	28,680	13
Trauma and orthopaedics	44,156	44,520	1
ENT	24,684	26,726	8
Ophthalmology	15,416	16,602	8
General medicine	88,339	87,362	−1
Paediatrics	81,882	88,772	8
Geriatric medicine	36,455	37,805	4
Obstetrics	71,785	72,304	1
Gynaecology	53,424	56,249	5
South West Thames Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	457,600	500,588	9
General surgery	67,027	71,983	7
Urology	16,103	19,760	23
Trauma and orthopaedics	33,786	37,227	10
ENT	17,233	19,911	16
Ophthalmology	11,347	13,539	19
General medicine	59,767	68,993	15
Paediatrics	56,924	58,494	3
Geriatric medicine	25,179	30,049	19
Obstetrics	50,430	52,148	3
Gynaecology	42,702	44,992	5
Wessex Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	526,284	562,571	7
General surgery	71,257	74,761	5
Urology	16,189	18,655	15
Trauma and orthopaedics	42,894	43,920	2
ENT	20,574	22,847	11
Ophthalmology	14,086	16,675	18
General medicine	73,067	78,026	7
Paediatrics	60,412	67,814	12
Geriatric medicine	29,914	34,257	15
Obstetrics	46,824	45,493	−3
Gynaecology	40,615	43,644	7
Oxford Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	383,333	404,923	6
General surgery	54,577	59,220	9
Urology	4,586	6,230	36
Trauma and orthopaedics	33,117	34,659	5
ENT	17,405	17,804	2
Ophthalmology	8,756	10,061	15
General medicine	50,701	52,630	4
Paediatrics	53,883	55,953	4
Geriatric medicine	13,870	14,975	8
Obstetrics	45,041	40,132	−11
Gynaecology	33,800	34,997	4
South Western Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	588,049	617,689	5
General surgery	86,917	92,618	7
Urology	15,063	21,804	45
Trauma and orthopaedics	46,039	49,764	8
ENT	19,490	22,013	13
Ophthalmology	16,272	18,863	16
General medicine	73,466	80,616	10
Paediatrics	65,525	62,008	−5
Geriatric medicine	33,171	33,883	2
Obstetrics	59,281	51,590	−13
Gynaecology	46,534	48,464	4
West Midlands Regional Health Authority			
All specialities	959,648	1,006,699	5
General surgery	135,227	141,046	4
Urology	26,288	32,256	23
Trauma and orthopaedics	78,064	81,399	4
ENT	37,182	40,647	9
Ophthalmology	22,165	23,045	4
General medicine	155,987	159,636	2
Paediatrics	128,908	124,426	−3
Geriatric medicine	36,860	40,283	9
Obstetrics	104,825	111,785	7
Gynaecology	75,900	77,898	3
Mersey Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	487,107	523,515	7
General surgery	82,084	81,108	−1
Urology	13,194	15,788	20
Trauma and orthopaedics	35,710	37,834	6
ENT	16,009	19,572	22
Ophthalmology	12,144	14,763	22
General medicine	63,781	66,258	4
Paediatrics	55,146	56,291	2
Geriatric medicine	27,019	30,727	14
Obstetrics	45,915	51,189	11
Gynaecology	41,799	39,048	−7
North Western Regional Health Authority			
All specialties	887,029	927,034	5
General surgery	125,263	128,609	3
Urology	34,638	37,682	9
Trauma and orthopaedics	62,744	67,282	7
ENT	38,437	39,282	2
Ophthalmology	25,618	30,060	17
General medicine	119,981	129,010	8
Paediatrics	103,530	105,819	2
Geriatric medicine	52,760	55,448	5
Obstetrics	92,006	92,534	1
Gynaecology	77,299	78,896	2
Special Health Authority			
All specialties	114,637	122,441	7
General surgery	3,057	2,958	−3
Urology	2,539	2,719	7
Trauma and orthopaedics	2,203	2,526	15
ENT	1,707	1,888	11
Ophthalmology	11,782	13,400	14
General medicine	10	324	3140
Paediatrics	9,935	9,953	0
Geriatric medicine	647	774	20
Obstetrics	8,458	7,923	−6
Gynaecology	6,217	6,394	3

Source: DH form KP70.

British Mercenaries

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what treatment within the NHS is available to mercenary soldiers returning to the United Kingdom injured in service abroad; and what charges can be made in treatment by a health authority.

Mr. Sackville: Eligibility to free national health service treatment is based on United Kingdom residence rather than nationality. If the individual is no longer a United Kingdom resident, he will be liable to pay for NHS hospital treatment unless covered by one of a number of exceptions. These are listed in the "Patient's Guide", which will be placed in the Library.

Management Consultancy

Ms. Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much has been spent by the NHS management executive on management consultancy costs in relation to patient-focused hospital projects; and for what purpose.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service management executive has not directly commissioned management consultants for patient-focused projects. It has, however, supported a number of health care organisations which, individually, have hired their own consultants.

Exercise Therapy

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will consider giving funding to local authorities who run exercise therapy sessions so that general practitioners can prescribe this treatment to their national health service patients suffering from diabetes, overweight, high-blood pressure and depression; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will give funding to Wealden district council to enable it to expand its exercise therapy prescribed by Dr. David Hanraty for patients; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Oasis project in Hailsham received funding of £3,400 in 1982 as a pilot project from the joint Department of Health/Health Education Authority "Look After Your Heart" programme. The project was included as an example of a healthy alliance in the "Health of the Nation Coronary Heart Disease Key Area Handbook". The project should become self-financing over time. Similar projects have been or are being set up in other parts of the country, funded locally. There is no intention to fund local authorities generally for this kind of project—as with all healthy alliances all participants should benefit, including local authorities, who should themselves benefit from use of local leisure facilities by more members of the community which they serve.

Pulmonary Embolism

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has undertaken into the use of heparin and low molecular weight heparin to reduce the number of deaths from pulmonary embolism following surgical operations; and if she will conduct a comparative study into its amount of use in England and Wales and that of other countries.

Dr. Mawhinney: At present, neither the Department of Health nor the Medical Research Council is conducting any such research. The need for initiating studies in this area, including those that make international comparisons, is considered alongside other priorities for research funding.

Learning Disabilities

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under what legislation local authorities are empowered to pay supplementary grants for people with learning disabilities living in unregistered homes.

Mr. Yeo: Local authorities can use the provisions of paragraph 2(1)(a) of schedule 8 to the National Health Service Act 1977 to provide financial support for people in unregistered residential accommodation who are in receipt of social security benefits. This power will be subsumed into section 26 of the National Assistance Act 1948 from 1 April 1993.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to introduce legislation requiring all group homes for people with learning disabilities to be registered with the local authority;

(2) what research the Government are funding or considering funding into the future status of unregistered homes for people with learning disabilities.

Mr. Yeo: None. The Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 comes into force on 1 April. It extends the requirement for registration of independent residential care homes to homes for fewer than four residents. Like the Registered Homes Act 1984, the amendment Act applies only where personal care as well as accommodation and board are provided.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the implications of the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act 1991 for homes which are currently unregistered which have four or more residents.

Mr. Yeo: Independent homes which provide personal care as well as board and accommodation for four or more people are required to register under the Registered Homes Act 1984. If some, but fewer than four, residents receive such services, registration as a small home will be required when the Registered Homes (Amendment) Act comes into force in April.

Homeless Mentally Ill

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what progress has been made tackling the lack of permanent move-on accommodation under the homeless mentally ill initiative;

(2) if she will fund the revenue care costs for the move-on housing supplied to the homeless mentally ill initiative by the Housing Corporation;

(3) who is to fund the revenue care costs for the move-on housing supplied to the homeless mentally ill initiative by the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Yeo: The Housing Corporation has agreed to secure 750 move-on places for people resettled by the homeless mentally ill initiative, a £20 million scheme to offer accommodation and psychiatric support to homeless mentally ill people. In general, it is for local social services departments to meet the costs of providing social care for people once they are resettled into the community. However, the Department is prepared to consider meeting some costs on an interim basis if longer-term guarantees of funding can be secured. Officials are having constructive discussions with the relevant local authorities about this.

Benzodiazepine

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps she is taking to ensure that benzodiazepine prescribing does not increase following the ending of the Roche case;

(2) what assessment she has made of the effect of measures to reduce benzodiazepine addiction since 1988; and what further measures she proposes;

(3) how many prescriptions were issued for benzodiazepines in each year since 1989.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guidance on the prescribing of benzodiazepines was given to doctors by the Committee on the Safety of Medicines in "Current Problems number 21", in January 1988. This advice is still appropriate and doctors also have access to detailed guidance in the "British National Formulary".

No assessment has been made of the effect of these measures, but there has been a steady reduction in the number of benzodiazepine prescriptions since 1989. The information requested is shown in the table.

Thousands

Year	*Number of prescriptions*
1989	17,274
1990	16,507
1991	15,662

Notes:
1. From January 1991, the data are based on items. Previously they were based on prescription fees and some items may attract more than one fee.
2. Figures for 1992 are not yet available.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the total sum allocated for addiction problems and *(b)* the proportion of this allocated specifically to problems of benzodiazepine addiction (i) in 1988 and (ii) in 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of £11·2 million was specifically allocated to health authorities in 1988-89 for the provision of services for drug misusers, including funds to help prevent the spread of HIV among drug misusers and from them to the wider population. The figure for 1992-93 is £20·8 million. In addition to these sums, health authorities can also fund drug misuse services from their general allocations. It is for health authorities to decide which services they purchase for people with drug problems, including those suffering from addiction to benzodiazepines.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate she has of the number of people addicted to benzodiazepines as a proportion of all addicts in *(a)* 1988 and *(b)* 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not currently available centrally.

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ask the Committee on Safety of Medicines to change its advice to doctors as given in Bulletin 21 of January 1988 regarding the drugs valium, librium and mogadon, following the ending of the Roche case.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Current advice strongly emphasises the dangers of dependence with benzodiazepines and advises doctors to limit their use to short-term relief—two to four weeks only—of anxiety and insomnia that is severe, disabling or subjecting the individual to extreme distress. This advice is still appropriate.

London Ambulance Board

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the South West Thames regional health authority appointed Mr. James Harris as the chairman of the London ambulance board; what are the names of the other members and their dates of appointment; what are the working hours expected from the chiarman and board members respectively; and what is the amount and basis of their respective remunerations.

Mr. Sackville: Mr. James Harris was appointed chairman of the London ambulance service board by South West Thames regional health authority on 1 March 1990. Current non-executive members of the London ambulance service board appointed on 8 June 1992 are:

Mrs. Mary Spinks
Mrs. Janet Preston
Mr. Victor Paige
Mr. Roderick Braithwaite

The chairman is paid £5,000 per annum as a non-executive member of South West Thames regional health authority. In the previous 12-month period, he spent 88 full days undertaking duties on behalf of the regional health authority and the London ambulance service. Non-executive members of the London ambulance board are unpaid but are asked to spend an average of two to three days per month on London ambulance service business.

Head Injuries

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many rehabilitation centres for patients with head injuries there are in England; which regions they are in; how many patients they treat a year; what is the cost per patient; and how many beds there are in each centre;

(2) if she will list the private rehabilitation centres for patients with head injuries in England.

Mr. Yeo: The information required is not held centrally. The Department of Health is providing central funding of £1 million per year to 12 model brain injury rehabilitation services in the national health service in England and I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) on 16 January 1992 at columns *625-26*.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on official entertainment in her Department during 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Sackville: In 1991-92, £168,151 was spent on hospitality. In 1992-93, hospitality expenditure up to the end of January was £197,529.

Spinal Injuries Units

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals in England have spinal injuries units; which regions they are in; how many patients they treat a year; what the cost was per patient; and how many beds there are in each unit.

Mr. Sackville: There are eight spinal units located in the following regions: Northern; Yorkshire; Trent; North East Thames; Oxford; Wessex; West Midlands; and Mersey. The remaining information is not held centrally in the form requested. Reported activity levels are available for 1991-92 as shown in the table. The total cost of the service in that year was £22·3 million.

Unit	Finished consultant episodes	Total bed days
Hexham general hospital	227	10,239
Pinderfields hospital, Wakefield	383	11,580
Lodge Moor, Sheffield	1,373	18,617
Royal national orthopaedic hospital, Stanmore	125	6,432
Stoke Mandeville hospital, Aylesbury	683	32,213
Odstock hospital, Salisbury	268	13,351
R. James and A. Hunt hospital, Oswestry	317	14,128
Southport hospital	N/a	N/a
TOTAL	3,376	106,560

Repeat Prescriptions

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has as to progress made by family practitioner committees in encouraging the development of repeat prescription control systems, as outlined in "Promoting Better Health: April 1990".

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioners are required by schedule 13 to the National Health Service (General Medical Services) Regulations, 1992, to include in their annual reports information on their arrangements for the issue of repeat prescriptions to patients. Guidance to regional health authorities on their corporate contracts with family health service authorities for 1993-94 emphasised that repeat prescribing is a high priority area and encouraged them to set targets for achievement by March 1994. A copy of this guidance has been placed in the Library.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Wicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many cases in each year since 1989 the London ambulance service was asked to give evidence at coroners' courts.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact Martin Gorham, chief executive of the London ambulance service, for details.

Free Prescriptions

Mr. Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many free prescriptions were dispensed in the year 1991-92; what was the figure in 1978-79; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney *[pursuant to his reply, 15 February 1993, c. 162]:* I have today laid before the House regulations providing for increases in charges in the national health service in England and Wales, which will take effect on 1 April 1993. The prescription charge will increase by £0·50p, from £3·75 to £4·25 for each quantity of a drug or appliance dispensed.

The new prescription charge, which is still significantly less than the average total cost of a single prescription item to the NHS, will only cost the average charge payer an extra £3 a year. A charge of £4·25 per item will raise about £278 million a year for the NHS. In 1991-92 the cost of drugs for family health services was over £2·3 billion.

The existing wide-ranging exemption and remission provisions for people who cannot afford prescription charges are unchanged. The rates of prescription pre-payment certificates will rise in line with the increase in prescription charges. These certificates provide extremely good value for money for people who need frequent or extensive medication but are not entitled to free prescriptions. They offer real savings to anyone who requires 15 or more items a year on prescription, or more than five in a four-month period.

Some 5 per cent. of all items dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors now go to people with prepayment certificates. Prescription charges are paid on a further 15 per cent. When the Government took office in 1979, this figure was 36 per cent. Indeed, 80 per cent. of prescribed items are now dispensed free—more than at any time since prescription charges were re-introduced in 1968.

Charges for elastic stockings and tights, fabric supports and wigs supplied through the hospital service will also be increased from 1 April 1993 by a similar percentage to the rise in the prescription charge.

The patient contribution to the cost of a course of dental treatment begun on or after 1 April 1993 will be increased from 75 to 80 per cent. The maximum charge for a single course of treatment begun on or after 1 April 1993 will also increase from £225 to £250.

I am pleased to announce a 2·75 per cent. average increase in the overall value of optical vouchers from 1 April 1993. The majority of voucher holders will find themselves better off as a result.

Concurrently with the regulations for England and Wales, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland will lay regulations to increase charges and spectacle voucher values in Scotland by the same amounts. Similar arrangements will apply in Northern Ireland.

Details of all the revised charges and increased optical voucher values have been placed in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

ERDF Assistance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what consultations he has had with Northern Ireland local authorities and other eligible infrastructure-providing bodies concerning the levels of *(a)* base and *(b)* supplementary credit approvals with a view to the provision of matching Government funding to maximise successful applications for European regional development fund assistance.

Mr. Atkins: In Northern Ireland the financing of infrastructure-providing bodies, including local authorities, is not dependent upon the issue of credit approvals and consequently there have been no consultations about the level of such approvals.

Police Interview Notes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what procedures are involved in the recording, safe-keeping, storage and retrieval of original police interview notes where criminal charges have been brought.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* This is a matter for the Chief Constable of the RUC. However, I understand that new procedures have recently been

introduced relating to the recording of notes of interviews with persons detained under legislation dealing with terrorism. Loose leaf interview sheets have been replaced with booklets which are electronically dated and time stamped upon issue and upon completion of each interview. Additional measures have been introduced to safeguard the long-term storage and security of these interview notes.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken by the Royal Ulster Constabulary to identify the whereabouts of the original police interview notes in the case of prisoner No. 708, H Block 5, A wing, HMP Maze, Belfast.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* This is a matter for the Chief Constable of the RUC. However, I understand that he has already written to the hon. Gentleman about this.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to *(a)* Coopers and Lybrand management consultants, *(b)* Touche Ross management consultants, *(c)* Price Waterhouse management consultants, *(d)* Ernst and Young management consultants, *(e)* Chrichton Roberts Ltd., *(f)* KPMG management consultants and *(g)* Leopold Joseph management consultants, with the total cost of the contracts for each contractor, for (i) the past 12 months and (ii) 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: The contracts awarded by the DTI to Coopers and Lybrand management consultants, Touche Ross management consultants, Price Waterhouse management consultants, Ernst and Young management consultants and KPMG management consultants in the periods 1 March 1992 to 17 February 1993 and 1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992, with total cost of the contracts for each contractor are listed. No contracts have been awarded to Leopold Joseph management consultants or Chrichton Roberts Ltd.

ERNST AND YOUNG

Contracts issued between 1 March 1992 and 28 February 1993

Devon and Cornwall Development Board Review
Service Sector Opportunities for Inward Investment
Analysis of Structure and Activities of European Competitor-Inward Investment Agencies
Statistical Analysis of Foreign Investment in the United Kingdom from 1986-1991
England—The Investment Opportunity: Revised Brochure
Coal Review 1992: an Independent Report on the Efficiency of British Coal as an Organisation
Insolvency Service Market Testing
Nuclear Electrics Operations
Separate Studies of INWARD and Yorkshire and Humberside Development Agency
North West Venture Club
Key Location Factors Study
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£690,275

Contracts issued between 1 April 1991 and 31 March 1992

Comparative Advantage Location Study
Study of European Legislation Affecting Businesses
Promotional Material: Electronics
Promotional Material: Automotive Components
Promotional Material: Information Technology
Advanced Robotics Programme Review
English Unit Strategy: 1992-93
England: Fact File
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£384,002

KPMG MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

Contracts issued between 1 March 1992 and 28 February 1993

Evaluation Review—British Screen Finance Limited
Open Systems Technology Transfer Programme 2
Disc Management Efficiency Study
Identification of Current and Long Term Issues in the Security Market and Policy Implications
Assistance to the London East Training and Enterprise Council in the Development of a Common Standards Programme
Validation of Seven Information Technology Futures Sector Scenario Reports
Teaching Company Scheme (Serc and Cit)
Post Office: Economic/Regulatory Advisers
Production of a Guide to British Companies in the Environmental Field
Literature Searches for Posts and Telecommunications Division
Seven Sector Reports on Key Applications for Information Technology
Customer Care Training
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£887,785

Contracts issued between 1 April 1991 and 31 March 1992

New Product Introduction Activities
Wirral Task Office: Enterprise Study
Export Intelligence Review
Open Systems Technology Transfer Programme
Technical Support to the Open Systems Technology Transfer Programme
Education Training Committee Strategy
European Futurewatch
Survey of Electronic Sources of Information on EC Legislation
Teaching Company Senior Academics Scheme
Evaluation Review of British Screen Finance Limited
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£381,644

PRICE WATERHOUSE

Contracts issued between 1 March 1992 and 28 February 1993

Privatisation of BTG
Privatisation of BTG: Portfolio of Technologies
Study of the Possible Privatisation of Parcelforce
ILS: Information Systems Strategy Study
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£418,850

Contracts issued between 1 April 1991 and 31 March 1992

Financial Advisers for BTG Privatisation, Phase II
Market Study: Market Opportunities for Producers of Carpets
Inward Investment—Tax Study
Implementation of Fairs and Promotions Branch (FFB) Efficiency
Scrutiny Project
TQM Programme for DTI NE
Privatisation of BTG
Privatisation of BTG: Portfolio of Technologies
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£1,223,430

TOUCHE ROSS & CO

Contracts issued between 1 March 1992 and 28 February 1993

Study of Chloro Fluoro Carbons Usage in Solvents
BNSC Space Telecommunications Strategy
Registry of Information Sources
Neural Computing Awareness Programme
Technology Partnership Initiative
Comparative Study of Freight/Shipping Costs and Services
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£2,803,480

Contracts issued between 1 April 1991 and 31 March 1992

Market Opportunities Task Force Policy Study
Speech and Natural Language Programme: Rational Objectives Assessment Monitoring and Evaluation (ROAME)
Knowledge Based Systems Technology Transfer Programme
Technology Transfer in Conservation of Biological Diversity Study

Information Systems Strategy Study
Data Review Study
Market Opportunity Task Force Policy Study/Market Change Analysis Activity
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£871,735

COOPERS AND LYBRAND
Contracts issued between 1 March 1992 and 28 February 1993
Review of Cash Position of British Technology Group plc
Further Analysis of Assessment of Computer Misuse Act 1990
IS Strategy for Facilities Management Group
BTG Privatisation: Financial Advice for Post-Privatisation Monitoring
Study to Explore and Enhance Business Awareness: Computer Misuse
Market Testing of IT Services Branch
Research Study on Supplier Relationships
Coal Review: Support

TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£192,840
Contracts issued between 1 April 1991 and 31 March 1992
Market Assessment Study of Computer Misuse
BTG: Reporting Accountants
Conference: Selling to Firms and Industries once in Public Sector
Review of Radiocommunications Agency's Licensing Procedures
Work Programme Following Local Authority Regulation of Business Seminar
Study into Radiocommunications Agency's Networking Requirements
Citizen's Charter and Local Authority Regulation
Local Authority Regulation of Business
Ozone Depleting Substances
BTG: Reporting Accountants
TOTAL COST OF CONTRACTS—£608,540

These figures do not include contracts issued by those Executive Agencies which have delegated authority to engage consultants.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Hutton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was *(a)* the total expenditure of and *(b)* the number of successful bids for funding to the intervention fund for shipbuilding in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The number of merchant vessels of 100 gross tonnes and over on which funding from the shipbuilding intervention fund was offered and the amount of assistance paid in financial years from 1979-80 to 1992-93 are set out in the table.

Number of merchant vessels on which SIF was offered and the amount paid

Financial Year	*Number of vessels on which SIF offered*	*Amount of SIF assistance paid £ million*
1979-80	20	31·9
1980-81	27	41·9
1981-82	62	49·1
1982-83	19	47·9
1983-84	14	36·2
1984-85	9	20·1
1985-86	29	25·9
1986-87	18	17·4
1987-88	13	13·6
1988-89	31	38·7
1989-90	28	37·5
1990-91	15	28·7
1991-92	10	31·1

Note: Because of the timing of the SIF grant payments, there is no direct link between the number of vessels ordered and the total grant in any one year.

European Community Funding

Mr. Leighton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what projects in Britain are or will be assisted by the extra money allocated to the European investment bank at the Edinburgh summit.

Mr. Sainsbury: The European investment bank has so far approved loans under the new, temporary facility agreed at Edinburgh to Lothian regional council for water supply, sewerage and road infrastructure schemes and to North West Water Services Ltd. for improvement of waste water infrastructure.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 17 February to the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), *Official Report*, column *269*, what response he has had to his application for objective 1 status for Northern Ireland, Merseyside, the Highlands and Islands, rural Wales, Devon and Cornwall and South Yorkshire; what counter-proposals he has; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Northern Ireland's objective 1 status was confirmed at the European Council at Edinburgh.

I am pleased to report that the Commission announced on 24 February that it had decided to propose the highlands and islands and Merseyside for objective 1.

The Government will continue to press the case for the other areas they believe should become objective 1: Devon and Cornwall, rural Wales and South Yorkshire.

The final decision on which regions are eligible for objective 1 rests with the Council of Ministers in the context of the review of the structural funds regulations. I do not expect that decision to come for several months.

Insurance Cover

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the extent of the practice of denying insurance cover to owners of property because they wish to rent to people in receipt of DSS benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have received a number of letters about the difficulty of obtaining insurance cover for properties where tenants are in receipt of social security benefits. Insurance cover for many properties in multi-occupation has become more difficult to obtain following reviews by insurance companies of types of business that had generated substantial losses. I am assured that companies are not assessing the risks they are prepared to underwrite solely on the status of the tenants. Following discussions with my officials and the Department of the Environment, the Association of British Insurers has now produced some guidance for owners of tenanted property on how to minimise the risks they present to insurers.

Trade Barriers

Mr. Oppenheim: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all EC or United Kingdom trade barriers, including industry to industry quotas and anti-dumping duties, which affect exports from the Czech Republic or Slovakia to the United Kingdom and EC.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom does not maintain any national quantitative restrictions against the Czech

and Slovak Republics. The Government are not aware of any inter-industry agreements which restrict trade with the United Kingdom or the EC.

In December 1991 the EC and Czechoslovakia signed an association agreement which establishes co-operation in a range of fields and, in particular, provides for the creation of a GATT-compatible free trade area within a maximum of 10 years—based on the principle of asymmetry in the dismantlement of trade barriers with the EC taking the lead. The trade provisions entered into force on 1 March 1992 under an interim agreement which abolished tariffs and quantitative restrictions on 50 per cent. of Czechoslovakian industrial exports to the EC and provided for the liberalisation of almost all tariffs and quantitative restrictions within the next four years. The interim agreement has since been extended until separate, new association agreements can be negotiated with the Czech Republic and Slovakia following the division of the federal republic.

The European Community maintains Community-wide restrictions on a number of textile and agricultural products from the Czech and Slovak republics and I will write to my hon. Friend with details of these.

The following anti-dumping measures are currently in place:

1. Artificial Corundum
   Price Undertaking
2. Hexamine
   Price Undertaking
3. Urea
   Volume Undertaking
4. Potassium Permanganate
   Variable duty linked to a mimium price of 2.20 ECU/kg
5. Seamless Steel Tubes
   30·4 per cent. provisional anti-dumping duty

On 25 February the EC Industry Council agreed in principle that tariff quotas should be negotiated with east European countries on their exports up until 1995 of sensitive steel products to the Community. It is now for the Commission to make suitable proposals to member states; the Government are concerned that these should be as liberal and as short-term as posssible.

Rural Mail Deliveries

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider the maintenance of second deliveries of mail in rural areas as part of his review of the Post Office.

Mr. Leigh: The Government remain fully committed to a nationwide letter service with delivery to every address in the United Kingdom, within a uniform structure of prices, but the detailed organisation of deliveries is an operational matter for the Post Office.

Girobank

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what account he is taking of the criticisms made by the National Audit Office over the sale of Girobank in his consideration of the future of Parcelforce and the Post Office.

Mr. Leigh: I have noted the comments made by the National Audit Office, and in particular its conclusion that a successful sale of Girobank was eventually achieved. I look forward to reading the report from the Public Accounts Committee in due course.

Waste

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 9 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *587*, if he will list the specific types of waste to which his figures refer, including the commodity codes given to those substances.

Mr. Eggar: The figures which I gave previously refer to wastes on the EC red and amber lists, which contain elements that may be hazardous. Red and amber list wastes are identified in EEC council regulation No. 259/93 of 1 February, published in the *Official Journal of the European Communities* of 6 February. Statistics on the exports of these wastes are publically available. They can be obtained from the appointed marketing agents for HM Customs and Excise, by reference to the commodity codes listed in *Business Monitor* MA21 "Guide to the Classification of Overseas Trade Statistics", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Owners Abroad

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what pre-bid guidance was given by the Director General of Fair Trading to Airtours plc before its bid for Owners Abroad plc was launched; what importance he attaches to such guidance in his decision on referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Heseltine: Any pre-bid guidance is given on a confidential basis. We do not therefore comment on whether guidance is given in a particular case. Such guidance is based on the information available at the time, which does not normally include comments by third parties. Where guidance is given, it is the Secretary of State who decides what it should be following advice from the Director General of Fair Trading. Such guidance is not binding on the Secretary of State in his merger reference decision.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date the Minister for Corporate Affairs withdrew from considering the Airtours bid for Owners Abroad; what reasons were given for this withdrawal; and what part the Minister has played in his Department's handling of the bid since December.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State decided on 15 February to stand aside from consideration of whether the Airtours bid for Owners Abroad should be referred to the MMC. It had come to his attention from correspondence that the chairman of Airtours lived in his constituency. Although he was advised that it would have been legitimate for him to continue to take part in the competition decision, he decided not to do so to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding. Prior to receipt of this correspondence he was responsible, with me, for the Department's interest in this as in other merger cases.

Export Licences

Mrs. Wait: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy towards export licences for South Africa; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: Export licence applications for South Africa, as for any other destination, are examined on their

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merits on a case-by-case basis. Licensable goods are listed in the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992, as amended. This takes account of the United Kingdom's commitments under the United Nations (Sanctions) Order SCR 392 1976, which covers the arms embargo.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the maximum and minimum times taken to grant export licences for *(a)* South Africa, *(b)* Poland and *(c)* Israel.

Mr. Needham: There are no minimum or maximum timescales.

Applications for South Africa and Israel which do not require advice from other Government Departments, and provided that the exporter has provided complete documentation, are normally issued within four to five working days from receipt. Applications which need further information from the exporter or are referred to other Government Departments for advice normally take four to six weeks to process.

Similarly, applications for Poland which do not need to be referred to our partners in COCOM are normally issued within five working days once the documentation is complete. Applications which are referred to COCOM take at least 75 working days.

Gas and Oil Investment

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the total financial investment to date in offshore exploration and extraction and the piping of supplies to the mainland for *(a)* gas and *(b)* oil.

Mr. Eggar: Total investment in the United Kingdom continental shelf up to the end of 1992 on exploration and appraisal, field developments, pipelines, and shore terminals for oil and gas amounted to some £122 billion in 1992 prices. It is not possible to allocate this expenditure between offshore and onshore activity, or between oil and gas.

Gas Consumption

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the maximum consumption of gas, as an increase in percentage terms over present consumption, that existing supply connections could sustain.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Gas plc.

Aviation Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing imports and exports of aircraft, aerospace and aviation-related equipment each year since 1987 in cash terms, distinguishing between the EC, the USA, Japan and other countries.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The information is not available in the form requested. Total imports and exports for the aerospace industry since 1987 to the latest available full year are as follows:

Military and Civil Aerospace Trade

£ billion

Year	*Exports*	*Imports*	*Trade balance*
1987	5·0	2·7	2·3
1988	5·4	3·7	1·6
1989	8·0	5·5	2·4
1990	8·0	5·9	2·0
1991	7·9	5·4	2·5
1992	7·7	5·2	2·5

Source: Overseas trade statistics for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the value added per head, and contribution to gross domestic product of the aircraft, aerospace and aviation equipment industries in each of the years since 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* Figures since 1987 to the latest available year for standard industrial classification 364—aerospace equipment manufacturing and repairing—are as follows:

	Gross value added at factor cost		*Contribution to manufacturing GDP*
		Total per head	
	£ million	*£*	*Per cent.*
1987	3,472·4	19,486	3·87
1988	3,866·8	22,666	3·87
1989	4,895·8	29,015	4·52
1990	5,648·0	32,459	5·09

Source: Annual Census of Production

Assisted Areas

Mr. Madel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further consideration he has given, following the debate on 21 January, to granting assisted area status for the Dunstable area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* We are continuing our consideration of the many bids which have been made for assisted area status.

Competition

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidance is given to Ministers in his Department about possible conflicts of interest when they are dealing with competition matters.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* Ministers with competition responsibilities receive general procedural guidance as a matter of course on handling competition decisions. This includes guidance on possible conflicts of interest. Such guidance is supplemented as necessary.

Renewable Energy Advisory Group

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the membership of his Department's renewable energy advisory group; what was the attendance of each REAG member; what is the present place of employment of each REAG member; and what are the criteria used in appointing experts to serve on the REAG.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The membership of the renewable energy advisory group is listed in the table:

Member	*Place of employment*
Dr. Mary Archer Attended 6 meetings	National Energy Foundation
Mr. John Bellak Attended 8 meetings	Severn Trent plc
Professor Sir Hermann Bondi Attended 7 meetings	Churchill College, Cambridge
Mr. Peter Goldsworthy Attended 7 meetings	NORWEB plc
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory Attended 5 meetings (member until April 1992)	Member of Parliament
Dr. Martin Holdgate Attended 4 meetings (chairman from June 1992)	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
Mr. Gerald Leach Attended 5 meetings	Stockholm Environment Institute
Dr. David Lindley Attended 8 meetings	National Wind Power Ltd.
Mr. Colin Moynihan Chaired 5 meetings (chairman and member until April 1992)	Consultant
Mr. Peter Oppenheimer Attended 6 meetings	Christ Church College, Oxford
Mr. Jeremy Sainsbury Attended 9 meetings	Fred Olsen Ltd.
Professor Arnold Wolfendale Attended 5 meetings	Durham University

Members of the group combined expertise from the renewable energy industry, business, management and academia.

Defence Diversification

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what action applicable to Hampshire the Government are taking to attract European Community funds for the purpose of defence diversification;

(2) what discussions the Government have held with the European Commission about the diversification of defence industries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* At the initiative of the European Parliament 130 million ecu, or about £106 million, comprising 85 million ecu, or £69·3 million, from the European regional development fund and 45 million ecu, or £36·7 million, from the European social fund was entered into the European Community budget for 1993 for a programme to be called CONVER to assist regions affected by the decline in the armaments industry and the closure of military bases. The Government will give careful consideration to the Commission's proposals for implementing this programme, which are expected to be issued shortly. The structural funds regulations require assistance from the ERDF to be concentrated in regions already designated for objectives 1, 2 and 5(b). Since many areas in the United Kingdom which have a high concentration of defence-related firms and military bases, including Hampshire, are not located within such regions, their prospects of benefiting from CONVER seem likely to be limited to assistance from the European social fund, which can be spent anywhere in the Community.

Imports and Exports

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of imports and exports for each member country of the OECD during 1992.

Mr. Needham: Data are not available in the form requested. Figures relating to 1991 are published in "Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade, Series A, February 1993, OECD", a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library, Information on United Kingdom trade for 1992 is published in "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom, Business Monitor MM20, December 1992", which is available in the House of Commons Library.

Japan

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of imports and what was the value of exports in Britain's trade with Japan in each year since 1987.

Mr. Needham: Information on the topic is regularly published in "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Visible Exports

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the percentage change in the level of United Kingdom visible exports in value terms to EC and Eastern European countries since 1989.

Mr. Needham: The information is given in the table.

Value of United Kingdom visible exports (change on previous year) (per cent.)

	EC	*Eastern Europe and former USSR*
1989	15·8	14·6
1990	15·8	0·5
1991	7·9	−15·3
1992	1.9	35·8

Source: Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Hardy: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the amount of aid given to the printing industry from central funds by Governments of EC countries which apply a positive rate of VAT to printed materials.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have made no such assessment.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department during 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Eggar: My Department spent £537,336 on entertainment in the 1991-92 financial year and has spent £427,935 to date in the 1992-93 financial year. The figure for 1991-92 includes expenditure by the former Department of Energy.

Renewable Energy

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will make a statement on the present state of discussions with the European Commission on support for renewable energy beyond 1998;

(2) what plans he has to announce a third non-fossil fuel obligation renewables order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Discussions with the European Commission are continuing. Decisions on any further renewables orders will be taken in the light of the coal review and the REAG report.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will seek an urgent meeting with the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc to discuss recent radioactive leaks following operational accidents at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: I meet the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc from time to time to discuss a range of issues involving the company. Occurrences involving releases of radioactivity into the environment are primarily matters for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, together with the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate, are carrying out investigations into the causes of the recent releases.

Correspondence

Mr. Robert B. Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will reply to the two letters from Mr. T. E. Blyth, managing director of John Herth and Co. Ltd., sent to him on 13 November 1992 and 6 January 1993, and to the two letters from the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West on the same matter dated 20 November 1992 and 13 January 1993.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* I regret that it has taken so long to reply to these letters. I have now done so.

Furniture Safety

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received *(a)* on behalf of retailers and *(b)* on behalf of waste disposal operators about the effect of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendments) Regulations 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 23 February 1993]:* My Department has received 39 letters on behalf of retailers of upholstered furniture about the fire resistance requirements of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations, as amended, applicable to second-hand furniture from 1 March this year. No representations on behalf of waste disposal operators have been received.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 2 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Catering

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how much was spent on catering at 10 Downing street and Chequers in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

The Prime Minister: The information is not available in the form requested. The cost of official hospitality met by my office was £40,976 in 1991-92 and is £25,835 in 1992-93 to date.

Higher and Further Education

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the effect on the estimates for *(a)* the Department for Education and *(b)* the Welsh Office as a result of functional changes in higher and further education.

The Prime Minister: The supply estimates for 1993-94, due to be published on 9 March, for the Department for Education's higher and further education vote, class X, vote 2, will show provision totalling £2,806,458,000 for grant-in-aid to the Higher Education Funding Council (England) which, from 1 April 1993, will be responsible for the distribution of grants to all publicly funded higher education institutions in England. This will replace provision formerly shown separately in the estimates for expenditure on universities in Great Britain distributed by the Universities Funding Council; for the former polytechnics and colleges of higher education in England distributed by Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council; for the Open university; for the Royal College of Art; and for Cranfield institute of technology. The 1993-94 estimates, class X, votes 2 and 3, will show provision totalling £2,705,411,000 for grant-in-aid to the Further Education Funding Council in England which from 1 April will be responsible for distributing grant to further education establishments and sixth form colleges in England currently under local authority control. Similarly, the relevant supply estimate for the Welsh Office, class XV, vote 5, will show grant-in-aid provision for further and higher education institutions in Wales to be distributed by the Further Education Council in Wales—£143,846,000—and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales—£178,975,000—including in the latter case provision for universities in Wales which in 1992-93 are supported by the Universities Funding Council. The supply estimates for 1993-94 are subject to parliamentary approval in due course.

DEFENCE

Bands

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 777, what is the current establishment and annual running costs of *(a)* the Household Division piping school, *(b)* the Guards Depot piping school, *(c)* the piping and drumming wing of the Scottish Division

and *(d)* the Army school of piping; what are the particular tasks of each unit; who is responsible for training Gurkha pipers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current establishment of the schools is as follows:

	Staff
Household Division Piping School (also known as the Guards Depot Piping School):	1 Pipe Major 3 Pipe Instructors
The Piping and Drumming Wing of the Scottish Division:	1 Pipe Major 1 Drum Major 5 Pipe Instructors 3 Drum Instructors
The Army School of Bagpipe Music:	1 Director of Bagpipe Music 1 Pipe Major Instructor

The annual running costs of these schools are not identified separately from their parent establishments.

The task of the Household Division piping school is piper training for the Household Division. From 1 April 1993 this school will close and training will be carried out at the piping and drumming wing of the Scottish Division.

The task of the piping and drumming wing of the Scottish Division is the piper and drummer training from elementary to advanced levels of the Scottish Regiments, the Royal Irish Regiment, the Scots and Irish Guards, and Gurkha and Royal Armoured Corps Regiments established for pipes and drums.

The task of the Army school of bagpipe music is to improve the standard of piping, drumming and bugling in the Army.

Class 3 (elementary) Gurkha Pipers and Drummers are trained at the piping and drumming wing of the Scottish Division. Other pipers are trained at the Army school of bagpipe music.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 777, how pipe bands are found from within the peacetime establishment of *(a)* Scottish infantry regiments and *(b)* the Royal Irish Regiment.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The pipe and drums in Scottish infantry regiments and the Royal Irish Regiment are primarily infantry trained soldiers. When not training or on operational duties they are made available on order of the commanding officer to pipe and drum.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the non-medical support roles fulfilled by Royal Marine musicians and buglers; and what are the non-musical peacetime tasks of the personnel of each of the six RM bands.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Apart from the medical orderly role, the purpose of the personnel of the Royal Marines band service in the event of war or other emergency is to provide disciplined bodies of men capable of assuming responsibility for the physical security of military establishments.

When not undertaking their musical duties the most important peacetime role of RM bands personnel is to train for their wartime medical orderly role. In addition, they have miscellaneous messing responsibilities.

RAF Dambusters

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what aircraft will participate in the 50th anniversary flight of the RAF dambusters 617 squadron when they fly over the Derwent Dams, Derbyshire on 19 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This year's programme of displays and flypasts by RAF aircraft has not yet been finally agreed. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will inform the hon. Member once a decision has been taken.

RAF Aston Down

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current establishment for Royal Air Force Aston Down, near Stroud; what is the current work and purpose of the station; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Aston Down ceased to be a Royal Air Force station in 1961 and is now a stores depot for the Ministry of Defence procurement executive. It has three roles—the storage of aircraft jigs and tools, the processing of used ammunition containers and, finally, the disposal, by auction, of vehicles and other equipment.

In addition, both the Civil Aviation Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have a small presence at the depot as lodger units. The depot has a strength of six Ministry of Defence civil servants, but the main part of the operation on the site is carried out under contract.

Merchant Shipping

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Denham), 22 February *Official Report*, columns 477-78, if he will list the occasions and cost of conversion of merchant shipping for specialist naval use; and what was the nationality of ownership and registration, if not British, in each case.

Mr. Aitken: Conversions of merchant ships for naval use during the last 10 years were:

HMS ENDURANCE formerly MV Polar Circle, a Norwegian ship, conversion completed 1992.

RFA ARGUS formerly MV Contender Bezant, an Italian ship, conversion completed 1988.

Costs are commercially confidential.

Details of conversions of merchant ships carried out more than 10 years ago would be available only at disproportionate costs.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the tonnage of merchant shipping hired during the Gulf war, the number of ships involved, the cost to the Exchequer, and the nationality of ownership and registration.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A total of 162 dry cargo ships, with a total dead-weight of 1·8 million tonnes, were chartered for the movement of men and equipment to and from the Gulf at a total cost of £138 million. A number of ships undertook more than one voyage. In addition, 10 tankers, with a total dead-weight of 209,000 tonnes, were chartered at a total cost of £4·76 million. The numbers of vessels chartered by flag, is as follows: Antigua and

Barbuda (16), Bahamas (9), Belgium (1), Cyprus (16), Denmark (27), Egypt (1), Finland (2), France (2), Germany (10), Greece (1), Honduras (1), Hong Kong (1), Iceland (1), India (1), Italy (4), Malta (2), Netherlands (2), Netherlands, Antilles and Aruba (2), Norway (15), Panama (7), Qatar (1), Spain (1), St. Vincent and Grenadines (2), Sweden (7), United Kingdom (11), Union of Myanmar (1) and Vanuatu (1). The ultimate ownership of these vessels is not generally known to my Department as the charter is with the operator, who is not necessarily the owner.

Aldermaston

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to make public the results of the inquiry into the incident at AWE Aldermaston on 8 December 1992.

Mr. Aitken: We are considering in the light of national security interests whether a useful unclassified version of the report can be made available.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress in commissioning the A91 building at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 6 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *530*. Commissioning work associated with building A91 at AWE Aldermaston is in abeyance and will not resume until the necessary remedial work has been completed satisfactorily.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all work that is at present being carried out by specialist radiological protection staff at AWE Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: The radiological protection specialist staff at AWE Aldermaston are responsible for advising on all radiological safety aspects of the work carried out there. They also give advice on radiological safety in other areas of the nuclear weapons programme and provide a comprehensive radiological monitoring service for Aldermaston personnel, for the Aldermaston site and for the local environment.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the recommendations of the Pochin inquiry into AWE Aldermaston; and how AWE Aldermaston has implemented each of them.

Mr. Aitken: A total of some 73 detailed actions were identified following the review by Sir Edward Pochin of radiological health and safety at Aldermaston, which did not make formal recommendations. Many of these actions were minor and were completed immediately. The short and medium-term measures involved changes to working practices, increases in health physics staff numbers, provision of improved monitoring and other equipment and safety management restructuring, all of which were put in place some years ago. Longer-term measures, involving procurement of completely new facilities for plutonium work and for processing of radioactive wastes have also been implemented in that new facilities have been constructed and are now being commissioned. These actions were taken in full consultation with the relevant trade unions.

The hon. Gentleman may wish to note that the Pochin report commented that the industrial accident history and incident record at Aldermaston bore comparison with the best industrial concerns and that recent figures confirm that this record has been maintained.

Trident

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will now set out the criteria against which the bids for Trident refitting from Rosyth and Devonport will be judged.

Mr. Aitken: In considering future arrangements for warship refitting, all relevant factors will be taken into account, including operational, strategic, technical, safety, commercial, programme and financial issues.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what proportion of housing benefit claims claimants receive a determination within *(a)* two weeks, *(b)* two to three weeks, *(c)* three to four weeks and *(d)* more than four weeks.

Mr. Burt: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 19 January 1993, at column *211*, which gives the latest available information on the proportion of claims determined within 14 days. Data on the proportion of claims which are determined after two weeks is not collected.

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's target for the number of days taken to provide payment for housing benefit claims; and what proportion of payments are made, from the date when the claim is received, within *(a)* two weeks, *(b)* two to three weeks, *(c)* three to four weeks, *(d)* four to six weeks and *(e)* more than six weeks.

Mr. Burt: Local authorities are statutorily required to make the first payment of any housing benefit—rent allowance—within 14 days of the receipt of a claim or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter. Where authorities are unable to do this, interim payments should be awarded.

Data on the proportion of claims where the target is met and on the proportion where it is exceeded are not collected. However, monitoring is to commence in 1993-94 with the introduction of the Audit Commission's citizens charter indicators in local authorities.

Income Support

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a table showing *(a)* the number of income support claimants and *(b)* the value of total payments made to them for residential and nursing home costs by region for each year from 1982-83 at (i) cash prices and (ii) 1982-83 prices.

Mr. Burt: Such information as is available is in the table.

Income support expenditure—Residential care and nursing homes

Year	Total numbers (thousands)	Annual equivalent expenditure (£ million)[1]	Annual equivalent expenditure (£ million)[2]
December 1982	16	39	39
December 1983	26	104	99
December 1984	42	200	182
December 1985	70	348	300
February 1986	90	459	396
May 1987	117	671	531
May 1988	147	878	649
May 1989	176	1,105	766
May 1990	189	1,270	814
May 1991	231	1,872	1,121
May 1982	270	2,460	1,409

[1] Current prices.
[2] 1982-83 prices.

Notes:
1. The date in the year column is the enquiry point on which the actual figures are based.
2. The 1982-83 prices figures have been calculated by adjusting the actual figure by the average GDP deflator index for the year in which the enquiry fell.
3. The figures have been rounded to the nearest million.

Reliable data on a regional basis are not available.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many redundant workers have been refused income support within the past year under the deprivation of capital regulations after paying off part or all of their mortgage.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what plans he has to reduce the amount of income support or unemployment benefit received by a young person or adult if they begin full time education;

(2) what plans he has to allow unemployed young people and adults to attend full-time education in the course of their choice and still receive income support or unemployment benefit.

Mr. Burt: We continue to be receptive to proposals to enable unemployed young persons and adults to receive education or training to enable them to take up employment. However, the social security system is not intended as a means of funding full-time education. Most full-time students are ineligible for income support, unemployment benefit and housing benefit. Students should look to the educational maintenance system of grants, top-up loans and access fund payments for their financial support.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the maximum weekly deductions from income support for water, overpayment, fines, poll tax arrears and fuel debt, expressed as deductions from income support rates for a single person aged over 25 years and a married couple, both over 25 years.

Mr. Burt: Regulations provide for a standard amount to be deducted from income support to repay arrears of housing costs, fuel, water, or fines. This is set at 5 per cent. of the personal allowance for a person aged 25 or over, currently £2·15 a week.

The standard deduction for recovery of an overpayment of benefit is set at three times 5 per cent. of the personal allowance for a person aged 25 or over—currently £6·45 a week—or, where fraud has been established, four times 5 per cent.—currently £8·60 a week.

The total amount which may be deducted to recover debt, including overpayments, may not exceed three times 5 per cent.—four times 5 per cent. where fraud has been established—of the income support personal allowance for a person aged 25 or over.

An additional £2·15 may be deducted for community charge debt or, where the court order is against a couple, 5 per cent. of the income support allowance for a married couple aged 18 or over—currently £3·35.

In addition, deductions may be made to cover current charges for fuel and water where, of course, the amount may vary from case to case.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what additional costs would be incurred in allowing young people and adults to continue to receive income support or unemployment benefit whilst they are attending full-time education.

Mr. Burt: This information is not available. Changes in the benefit arrangements for full-time students made in 1990 were accompanied by enhanced support for students made available through the educational maintenance system. It is not, therefore, possible to provide reliable estimates of the cost of reintroducing income support or unemployment benefit.

Benefit Entitlement

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what entitlements to benefits persons aged 16 and 17 years have during the period between a training place being offered and the start of the training period.

Mr. Burt: Subject to meeting the qualifying conditions, the benefits listed in my reply to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North, (Mr. Evans) on 9 June 1992 at column *386* may be payable to or in respect of young people waiting to commence a youth training placement.

Water Charges

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what elements of water charges were included in the Rossi index during the period April 1988 to April 1992; and what account these amounts took of variations in the cost of water, sewerage and environmental charges.

Mr. Burt: Water charges were not included in the Rossi index used to uprate income-related benefits between April 1988 and April 1992. During this period the index was based on the RPI excluding all housing costs.

Retirement Pensions (Emigration)

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what advice is issued to British citizens considering emigrating on the potential effects of such a step on their future state retirement pensions, in particular where emigration is contemplated to a country with which there is no reciprocal social security agreement.

Miss Widdecombe: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will reply to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Andrew Bowden, dated 1 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what advice is issued to British citizens considering emigrating on the potential effects on their future state retirement pensions, in particular where emigration is contemplated to a country with which there is no reciprocal social security agreement.

A person considering emigrating should seek advice from their local Benefits Office. They will be issued with leaflet NI38 "Social Security Abroad", a guide to National Insurance contributions and Social Security benefits outside the European Community and reciprocal agreement countries. The leaflet gives general guidance on the social security arrangement in both countries with, and without, reciprocal arrangements. However, because of the complex nature of contributions and benefits for those going abroad the leaflet also explains that the customer can get further help and specific advice on individual circumstances, or problems, from the Department's Overseas Branch at Newcastle upon Tyne. This branch specialises in contributions and benefits involving periods abroad.

A copy of the leaflet is enclosed for information.

There is also a series of 22 leaflets containing information about the reciprocal social security arrangements with individual countries and the European Community which are available on request.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

EDUCATION

Student Incomes

13. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if the forthcoming survey of student incomes will include part-time students.

Mr. Boswell: No. The survey is one of a series targeted at students already within the scope of support fixed by central Government, which comprises awards, loans and access funds. Other forms of support are available for part-time students.

Grant-maintained Schools

16. **Mr. Nigel Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding grant-maintained school budgets for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: We have received a number of representations from a range of bodies including LEAs, schools and local authority associations. On 9 February we announced our final decisions, which were taken in the light of the representations received.

English Testing

17. **Mr. Burns:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a further statement with regard to the proposal to test English in secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: We need tests to measure pupils' performance in this key subject. My right hon. Friend announced on 19 February that the English tests for 14-year-olds will be going ahead in June this year. The results will be reported to parents and national totals will be published. Results will be reported in school performance tables for the first time in 1994.

Teacher Training

18. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the Government's plans for teacher training.

Mr. Forth: Last summer, my right hon. Friend introduced a reform of initial teacher training for secondary teachers which required a decisive shift to more school-based training. We have said that we shall be announcing proposals for reform of training for primary teachers around Easter. Our object is to make training more relevant to the needs of schools and the national curriculum. We shall keep the question of further reform under review to that end.

Parental Choice

19. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures he proposes to promote parental choice in education in rural areas.

Mr. Forth: The Government's reforms since 1980 have ensured that parents in all areas now have the widest possible choice among available schools, and the information on which to base that choice.

English (Key Stage 3)

20. **Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a further statement on the trials conducted prior to the implementation of key stage 3 SATS in English.

Mr. Forth: Trials of tests for 14-year-olds in English started in 1990. Since then the trials have involved some 45,000 pupils and 500 schools. Further trials of the papers for this summer's tests will take place over the coming weeks.

22. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many representations he has received from school governing bodies in respect of the key stage 3 English tests; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave earlier to the hon. Members for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) and for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson).

Middleton Park High School

21. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he has plans to visit Middleton Park high school to discuss those factors which influenced its standing in his league table.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no plans to visit Middleton Park high school at present. The public examination results published by the Department last November for each local education authority area were produced alphabetically as indicators of the performance of schools and pupils and not as league tables.

Personal Responsibility

23. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to foster a sense of personal responsibility and responsibility towards the wider community amongst children at school.

Mr. Forth: Section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988 requires the curriculum of every maintained school to promote pupils'
"spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development",
and to prepare them for the
"opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life".
My right hon. Friend has made clear his expectation that all school activities should be underpinned by a clear ethos which governs behaviour and practice in the school.

Part-time Students

24. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to assist with funding for training and postgraduate education of part-time students.

Mr. Boswell: Part-time students following designated courses of initial teacher training may qualify for mandatory awards in respect of their maintenance and tuition fees. They may also apply for student loans. Students on other part-time courses may apply for discretionary awards from the appropriate grant-making body. There are no present plans to change these arrangements.

English Teaching

25. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement concerning the teaching of English in secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: The introduction of the national curriculum has already led to improvements in the teaching of English. But experience has shown that there is still room for improvement, and that is why my right hon. Friend commissioned a review of the English curriculum by the National Curriculum Council with the Curriculum Council for Wales. The report of that review is expected shortly.

Repairs (Cornwall)

26. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the capital spending limits on Cornwall county council for investment in repairing school buildings in the county.

Mr. Forth: No limit has been put on the level of Cornwall's capital spending on school repairs. We do limit the extent to which all local authorities can borrow to fund their capital programmes. But decisions on priorities between services and projects are for Cornwall.

Education Budget

27. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the comparative weighting of the education budget between higher and further education and the primary and secondary education sectors.

Mr. Boswell: The Government's expenditure plans for education reflect the Government's judgment of the relative needs and pressures on the respective sectors, particularly bearing in mind the projected growth from 1992-93 to 1993-94 of 1·7 per cent. in the number of schoolchildren, 7·9 per cent. in the number of further education students, and 8·5 per cent. in the number of higher education students.

European Community (Education Systems)

28. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what studies he has made of other educational systems in use in the EC.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend gathers a range of information through the regular contacts of Ministers and officials with their counterparts in other EC countries, through detailed studies by Her Majesty's inspectorate of schools, and through the EC EURYDICE network for the exchange of information between policy makers about the educational systems of member states.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what further representations he has received following the announcement of new measures to strengthen support for pupils with special educational needs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Ministers and officials have continued to meet numerous organisations concerned with special educational needs to discuss issues arising from the Education Bill. On 11 November 1992 and 7 January 1993 I met the Special Education Consortium, and am meeting it again on 4 March, with my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State. We have welcomed the constructive contribution which the consortium has made to this important debate.

Student Fees

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to permit universities and other higher and further education institutions to charge full or part fees to students direct other than through local education authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: It is for universities and colleges of higher education to set their own fee rates. The Government have no power to set the fees charged by institutions. We have no plans to change the current arrangements whereby standard tuition fees are reimbursed from public funds for students holding mandatory awards.

Schools Councils

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many square feet of *(a)* offices, *(b)* meeting rooms and *(c)* storage are used currently by (i) the National Curriculum Council and (ii) the School Examinations and Assessment Council.

Mr. Forth: The National Curriculum Council has almost 21,000 sq ft of office space, including common areas, 4,500 sq ft of meeting rooms and 8,500 sq ft of storage space, divided between two sites in the centre of York and one on the outskirts of the city.

The School Examinations and Assessment Council has almost 29,000 sq ft of office space, including common areas, 4,000 sq ft of meeting rooms and 1,700 sq ft of storage area, at one site in Notting Hill Gate.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost per square foot of the offices rented by the National Curriculum Council in York.

Mr. Forth: The National Curriculum Council currently leases three properties in York. The cost of Albion Wharf is £15·00 per square foot; the cost of offices at 5A Museum street is £9·90 per square foot; and the cost of the Warehouse is £4·00 per square foot.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to announce where the headquarters of the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority will be based.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has this morning announced that the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority will be based in London. He has also announced that the Funding Agency for Schools will be based in York.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff will be employed by the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority when it is set up.

Mr. Forth: The detailed staffing structure will be a matter for the chairman designate to discuss with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. It is expected that the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority will employ fewer staff than the National Curriculum Council and the School Examinations and Assessment Council combined.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many square feet of *(a)* offices, *(b)* meeting rooms and *(c)* storage he expects to be required by the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority when it is set up.

Mr. Forth: It will be for the chairman and chief officer of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority finally to identify the amount of space required and the uses to which that space is put. My right hon. Friend's decision on the location of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority was, however, informed by an estimate of the amount of space likely to be required by the new body.

The estimate is that 14,000 to 17,000 sq ft will be needed for offices, and something over 3,000 sq ft will be needed for facilities including meeting rooms, storage areas and administration facilities. On top of this, space will be required for circulation.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost per square foot of the offices rented by the School Examinations and Assessment Council in London.

Mr. Forth: The cost per square foot of the offices rented by the School Examinations and Assessment Council is £25·00.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing the staff turnover by grade at *(a)* the National Curriculum Council and *(b)* the School Examinations and Assessment Council in 1990-91 and 1991-92 and so far in 1992-93.

Mr. Forth: The table shows, by grade, the numbers of staff who have left employment in the NCC and the SEAC in the years indicated.

Grade	*National Curriculum Council*			*School Examinations and Assessment Council*		
	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
G2	—	1	—	—	1	—
G3	1	—	—	—	—	—
G4	—	1	—	—	1	—
G5	—	1	—	—	—	—
G6	2	3	—	—	—	1
G7	3	3	2	1	1	2
SEO	3	2	—	—	—	1
HEO	4	4	1	1	2	—
EO	2	5	2	2	7	11
AO	3	1	2	1	2	1
AA	1	2	1	4	1	1
WPO/SPS	—	—	1	1	1	—
SEB/SGB	—	1	1	1	1	—
	19	24	10	11	17	17

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many finance staff are employed by *(a)* the National Curriculum Council and *(b)* the School Examinations and Assessment Council; and how many staff at each grade in each body are qualified accountants.

Mr. Forth: The finance section of the National Curriculum Council comprises eight full-time and two part-time staff. Of these, three of the full-time staff are qualified accountants, one at grade 5, one at SEO, and one at HEO.

The finance section of the School Examinations and Assessment Council comprises seven staff. Of these one, at grade 6, is a qualified accountant.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff are employed currently by *(a)* the National Curriculum Council and *(b)* the School Examinations and Assessment Council.

Mr. Forth: The National Curriculum Council currently employs 104 staff. The School Examinations and Assessment Council currently employs 147·4 staff.

Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total number of maintained *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools; how many of each are (i) voluntary aided, (ii) voluntary controlled and (iii) grant maintained; and how many in each category are Anglican, Roman Catholic, other denominational and non-denominational.

Mr. Forth: In England in January 1992, the latest date for which full information is available, there were 18,926 and 3,847 maintained primary and secondary schools respectively, including 143 self-governing state—grant-maintained—schools. The following table gives a breakdown of those schools by status and denomination.

Maintained primary and secondary schools by status and denomination—England January 1992

	Primary	*Secondary*
Voluntary Aided		
Church of England	1,905	109
Roman Catholic	1,809	330
Other denominational	21	4
Non-denominational	21	43
Total	3,756	486
Voluntary Controlled		
Church of England	2,759	86
Roman Catholic	1	—
Other denominational	27	—
Non-denominational	44	91
Total	2,831	177
Self-Governing State (GM)		
Church of England	2	9
Roman Catholic	1	7
Other denominational	—	—
Non-denominational	10	114
Total	13	130
Special Agreement		
Church of England	1	15
Roman Catholic	1	49
Other denominational	—	1
Non-denominational	—	—
Total	2	65
County		
Non-denominational	12,324	2,989
Total	18,926	3,847

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total number of schools which have held ballots on grant-maintained status; and how many of them are *(a)* Anglican and *(b)* Roman Catholic, listing in each category how many are (i) now operating as grant-maintained schools, (ii) have received approval for grant-maintained status, (iii) have published proposals and are awaiting a decision, (iv) have voted for grant-maintained status but not yet published proposals, (v) have had their proposals rejected and (vi) have voted against grant-maintained status.

Mr. Forth: A total of 928 schools have held ballots on grant-maintained status, of which 87 are Anglican and 91 are Roman Catholic. Detailed information is given in the table.

	Anglican	*Roman Catholic*
Operating	30	18
Approved and minded to approve	2	12
Proposals published	19	26
Proposals awaited	13	19
Proposals rejected	7	2
No votes	16	14

Pre-School Education

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of children in the London borough of Redbridge are in pre-school education; what is the national average; what is the comparable figure for each EC country; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: In 1992 the age participation rate for maintained schools was 34 per cent. for Redbridge and 49 per cent. for England. The participation rate for England for all forms of education and group day care for the under-fives was over 90 per cent. Comparable figures for all EC countries are not available: where participation rates for education are known, the range in 1989 was from 27 per cent. to 99 per cent.

Palmerstone Special School

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education why Thomas Kelleher has been excluded from Palmerstone special school, Liverpool; what provision is being made for his education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: This is a matter for Liverpool local education authority. However, it has told the Department that Thomas Kelleher was withdrawn from the school by his parents on 22 February and that an alternative placement is being negotiated. I hope that the matter can be resolved quickly and satisfactorily.

Nursery Education

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to include in the parents charter an entitlement to nursery education for three and four-year-olds.

Mr. Forth: None.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research his Department has carried out into the benefits of nursery education; and if he will commission new research.

Mr. Forth: Within the last 10 years the Department has supported the child health and education study cohort project which included work on shorter and longer-term effects of pre-school provision. It also supported a review of this and other research projects in 1985-87 by Professor Margaret Clark, whose report "Children under five: Educational Research and Evidence" is available in the Library. The Department keeps under review the need for research on these as on other issues.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to provide finance to allow grant-maintained primary schools to provide nursery places.

Mr. Forth: Self-governing schools providing nursery education receive in annual maintenance grant an

amount based on the level of funding they could have expected to receive for that provision from the former maintaining local education authority. The Department recoups the full cost of annual maintenance grant from the relevant LEA.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if a proposal to no longer maintain nursery provision in a primary school would be regarded as a significant change of character.

Mr. Forth: Yes.

Class Sizes

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what has been the average size of class taught by one teacher in primary schools in Staffordshire in each year since 1983;

(2) what percentage of single-teacher classes in Staffordshire comprised more than 30 children in each year since 1983.

Mr. Forth: Information about classes being taught by one teacher in maintained primary and secondary schools in Staffordshire local education authority for the years 1983 to 1992 is given in the table.

Classes being taught by one teacher in maintained primary and secondary schools in Staffordshire local education authority

Position as at January each year

Year	*Average size of classes in primary schools*	*Percentage of classes with over 30 pupils*	
		Primary	*Secondary*
1992	26·6	20·4	6·9
1991	26·3	18·4	6·2
1990	26·0	19·8	5·9
1989	25·5	16·8	6·0
1988	25·4	17·8	6·7
1987	25·4	18·0	8·0
1986	25·3	17·7	7·8
1985	24·5	13·4	8·6
1984	24·1	12·9	8·7
1983	23·9	13·2	9·2

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to commission research on any relationship between class size and school effectiveness.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no plans to commission such research.

Examination Results

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he will take to include a measurement of added value in the publication of examination and test results for schools.

Mr. Forth: The consultation documents published by the Department on 19 February make it clear that we intend to keep under review the question of measuring added value, as national curriculum assessment and the performance tables of test and examination results are developed year on year. Progress in this complex area will depend in large part on the degree of consensus which can be secured.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action she is undertaking to increase reporting of industrial injuries following the publication of the Health and Safety Executive supplementary report to the 1990 labour force survey.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since publication of the initial results of the Health and Safety Executive supplement to the 1990 labour force survey in the Health and Safety Commission annual report 1990-91, the HSE's operational divisions have emphasised the reporting requirements at visits and have continued to inquire into accident reporting practices and closely examine records as a routine part of inspection. Where appropriate prosecution for failure to report an injury is instituted. Detailed information on the reporting requirements is provided to every new employer that comes to the HSE's attention. Local authorities have taken similar action in premises for which they are the enforcing authority.

The HSE has also commissioned research into employer's awareness and understanding of the requirements. The results are likely to influence legislative proposals, to simplify both the reporting requirements and the reporting arrangements, to be brought forward later this year by the HSC.

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the number of estimated working days lost through industrial injury under the labour force survey and Health and Safety Executive supplementary report; what action she proposes to reduce this figure; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: A supplement to the 1990 labour force survey, sponsored by the Health and Safety Executive, showed that employed people in Great Britain took around 23 million days off work as a result of workplace injury in the year to spring 1990.

Responsibility for maintaining and improving health and safety standards rests with employers and others concerned at the workplace.

The Health and Safety Commission's priorities for promoting improvements in health and safety at work are set out in its plan of work for 1993-94 and beyond, which will shortly be submitted to my right hon. Friend for approval and is expected to be published in the spring.

Employment Training

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what arrangements exist in Bradford for those undertaking employment training to be supplied with tools necessary for their training and with necessary equipment for undertaking courses of study as part of their ET; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The contract with Bradford and District training and enterprise council, which is responsible for delivering adult training in Bradford, requires that the TEC sets out in any contract with a training supplier the arrangements to be made for the provision of any necessary protective clothing and/or equipment for participants on adult training. If to follow the training programme a participant requires protective clothing and/or equipment it will be provided.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people who got jobs after doing employment training still had that job six months later, in this year and each preceding year.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* Although there is information on jobs immediately after leaving an ET scheme and on jobs six months after leaving a scheme, there is no information on whether it is the same job. Therefore, the information requested is not available.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many places were available on the employment training scheme in the current year and in each preceding year; in each year, how many trainees started the course; how many completed it; and how many got jobs at the end of it in each year.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The information requested is given in the following table.

Employment training: planned entrants, entrants, job outcomes for Great Britain

(numbers and percentage)

Year proportion of all leavers	*Planned entrants*	*Actual entrants*	*Proportion completing training*	*Into a job[1] immediately after their training*
September 1988 to March 1989[2]	300,000	238,600	n/a	n/a
April 1989 to March 1990	560,000	430,600	[3]44	[3]37
April 1990 to March 1991	430,000	394,100	[4]38	[4]33
April 1991 to March 1992	260,000	[7]291,600	[5]55	[5]31
April 1992 to March 1993	248,000	[6][7]210,700	n/a	n/a

[1] Jobs includes full-time, part-time and self-employment.
[2] ET started in September 1988.
[3] Surveying of leavers did not start until July 1989 and this was done three months after they left their programme.
[4] Results from leavers three months after leaving training.
[5] From January 1991 leavers were surveyed six months after leaving their training.
[6] January 1993 is the latest period for which starts information is available. Survey data is not available for 1992-93 leavers.
[7] Provisional estimates.

Source: Training Statistics 1990; OSMOSIS, Scottish and Welsh MIS; National Follow-up Survey; PES.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list in order the top 100 travel-to-work areas in England in terms of highest male, female and total unemployment figures for the latest month available.

Mr. McLoughlin: Claimant unemployment rates for the areas requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *570*, if she will break down the overall figures on non-manual worker unemployment, by region.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The regional breakdown of non-manual workers who are unemployed on the internationally standard ILO definition is given in the following table.

thousands

Region	*Number*
Great Britain	822,000
Northern	40,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	52,000
East Midlands	54,000
East Anglia	26,000
South East	332,000
—Greater London	163,000
—Rest of South East	169,000
South West	70,000
West Midlands	72,000
North West	75,000
Wales	27,000
Scotland	74,000

Source: Summer (June-August) 1992 Labour Force Survey (not seasonally adjusted).

Aircraft Industries

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the aircraft, aerospace and aviation equipment industries in each of the years since 1987; and if she will give an estimate of the distribution of this employment by occupation, socio-economic group and income band relative to manufacturing industry as a whole.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The latest employment figures are from the biennial census of employment for the aerospace equipment manufacturing and repairing industry. The available information is as follows:

Employees in employment in Great Britain

	Number
September 1987	158,000
September 1989	163,000

These figures represent 3·1 per cent. and 3·2 per cent. respectively of all employees in manufacturing industries. Estimates for later dates are aggregated with other transport industries and cannot be identified separately. Figures for 1991 will be available after the publication of the September 1991 census of employment in April.

Information on the distribution of earnings can be found in tables 66 to 73 of part C of the new earnings survey for each of the years requested. A copy of the survey is available in the Library.

Figures on the distribution of employment by occupation within socio-economic group is being extracted, but the work will take some time to complete. I will write separately with the information and place a copy in the Library.

Defence Industries (Alternative Employment)

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assistance her Department is providing to former employees of defence-related industries in Hampshire in finding alternative employment.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* In Hampshire, as elsewhere, the employment service and training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes, which are designed to take account of special local circumstances to help former employees of any industry find the best and quickest route back to employment.

Unemployment, Southampton

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment where the Southampton, Itchen and Southampton, Test, constituencies come in the order of English constituencies ranked by unemployment on the latest available figures.

Mr. McLoughlin: *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* For areas with different-sized work forces, such as parliamentary constituencies, the only meaningful comparisons are based on unemployment rates. Official estimates are not available at the level of parliamentary constituencies.

Youth Training

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people went on the youth training scheme in the current year and each preceding year; in each year, how many completed the course; how many went on to get a job at the end of the course; and how many were still in employment at the end of six months.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The information requested is given in the following tables.

Youth Training
April 1986 to March 1992: Great Britain
Starts and Outcomes (All leavers)
Table 1

(numbers)

	Youth Training starts
April 1986 to March 1987	419,600
April 1987 to March 1988	398,100
April 1988 to March 1989	407,200
April 1989 to March 1990	384,000
April 1990 to March 1991	347,800
April 1991 to March 1992	[1]293,000
April 1992 to January 1993	[1,2]233,000

[1] Provisional estimates.
[2] Latest figures available.

Source: Training Statistics 1990 and Osmosis, Scotland and Wales Management Information.

Table 2

(per cent.)

	Leavers who completed agreed training	*Leavers in work immediately on leaving YT*	*Leavers in work three/six months after leaving YT*
April 1986 to March 1987	n/a	n/a	[1]49
April 1987 to March 1988	19	n/a	[2]60
April 1988 to March 1989	33	n/a	[3]67
April 1989 to March 1990	35	n/a	[4]66
April 1990 to March 1991	38	35	[5]57
April 1991 to March 1992	34	35	[6]50

[1] to [4] Followed-up 3 months after leaving.
[5] and [6] Followed-up 6 months after leaving.

Source: YT Leavers and Follow-up Survey.

ENVIRONMENT

Energy Efficiency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money was invested in energy efficiency in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: A large part of the investment in the United Kingdom economy will have some effect on improving energy efficiency, although it is not possible to separate out an aggregate total of investment specifically directed at this purpose. However, in 1991 the amount of energy required per unit of GDP was some 18 per cent. lower than in 1979.

Air Quality, Victoria

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the latest information available to him on the monitoring of air quality at Bridge place, Victoria, in London.

Mr. Maclean: Information on air quality at Bridge place, Victoria, in London is issued every day by the Department of the Environment on the free air quality telephone service—0800 556677—and on Ceefax page 404. This information is provisional; ratified summary statistics are published in annual reports by my Department and Warren Spring Laboratory.

Packaging

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue guidelines to the United Kingdom packaging industry to encourage the phasing out of the use of inks and pigments containing toxic heavy metals, paints using solvents and lead bottle tops within packaging.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to do so at present.

Local Government Ministers

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the current and previous Ministers whose responsibilities cover or covered local government or inner cities since the election of 1979.

Mr. Robin Squire: The current and previous Ministers whose responsibilities cover or covered local government or inner cities since the election of 1979 are:

Secretary of State
Mr. Michael Heseltine
Mr. Tom King
Mr. Patrick Jenkin
Mr. Kenneth Baker
Mr. Nicholas Ridley
Mr. Chris Patten
Mr. Michael Howard

Minister of State
Mr. Tom King
Lord Bellwin
Mr. Kenneth Baker
Mr. John Patten
Dr. Rhodes Boyson
Mr. Michael Howard
Mr. John Gummer
Mr. David Hunt
Mr. Michael Portillo
Mr. John Redwood

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Lord Bellwin
Mrs. Angela Rumbold
Mr. Christopher Chope
The Hon. Colin Moynihan
Mrs. Virginia Bottomley
Lord Hesketh
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory
Mr. Robert Atkins
Mr. Patrick Nicholls
Lady Blatch
Mr. Robert Key
Mr. Robin Squire

River Wear (Pollution)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how often the River Wear is tested for pollution; when it was last tested; what were the results; and what precautions are being taken against pollution in the event of mine closures in County Durham.

Mr. Maclean: The National Rivers Authority carries out regular monitoring of river quality; details of sampling points, dates of sampling and results obtained are held on public registers in the NRA's regional offices. It is for British Coal and the NRA, in the first place, to assess the environmental effects of pit closures and to consider what action may need to be taken to avoid pollution.

Teacher Councillors

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment under what circumstances a school teacher would be disqualified from being elected as a member of a local authority under section 80 of the Local Government Act 1972; and what proposals there are to allow school teachers at grant-maintained schools or schools subject to local management to stand for membership of a local authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: Teachers are currently barred only from standing for election to the local education authorities of which they are employees. There are no plans to amend this provision, which does not apply to teachers in schools which have opted out of local education authority control.

Highways Authorities

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proportion of development undertaken by local highways authorities is permitted by part 13 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988;

(2) if he will seek to amend part 13 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 to reduce the scope of permitted development rights for development by local highway authorities;

(3) what examination he has made of whether any development permitted by part 13 of the Town and Country Planning General Development Order 1988 is likely to give rise to significant environmental effects.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning announced on 7 July 1992 a review of all permitted development rights which could have significant environmental effects. That review is near completion, and a consultation paper will be issued shortly.

As permitted development rights do not require a planning application, information on the proportion of development that is undertaken by local highway authorities without express consent is not available.

Housing Associations

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many units were provided by housing associations in rural areas during 1991-92; and what proportion this represented of the total provision for housing associations for that year.

Mr. Baldry: In 1991-92, the Housing Corporation approved funding for 2,355 homes in settlements with populations of 3,000 or fewer. This represented 5·5 per cent. of the total programme for that year.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what expectations he has of the ability of housing associations to raise private finance during the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Housing associations are expected to raise some £850 million of private finance in the current financial year in support of projects funded by the Housing Corporation, including schemes undertaken as part of the package to help regenerate the housing market, announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's autumn statement. This is a welcome addition to the £2·3 billion of Government money being given to housing associations this year and means that a greater number of new social homes will be provided than would otherwise be possible.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much, as an annual percentage, of rents paid by housing association tenants is met wholly or partly from benefits.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested on the amount of housing benefit paid to housing association tenants is not available. The Department of Social Security has, however, started to collect information on housing association tenants who receive housing benefit and it is likely to be available later this year.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about the effect of the poverty trap on the ability of housing associations to house people in low-paid employment.

Mr. Baldry: In discussions and correspondence with housing associations some express concern that, as rents increase, it may become more difficult for associations to house those in low-paid employment.

It is, of course, the case that the housing benefit system is designed to target resources effectively on those in greatest need and the fact that substantial numbers of new association tenants are in receipt of benefit demonstrates that new association homes are going to those in greatest need.

Nevertheless, the latest data shows that up to one third of new lettings are made to tenants who do not receive housing benefit.

Deregulation

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the items of regulation which are due to be examined by his departmental deregulation unit.

Mr. Redwood: All my Department's regulations that have an impact on business are being reviewed to ensure that, where they are necessary, they impose the minimum burden. A provisional list of these regulations has recently been prepared. Once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consistency of definition, it will be placed in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the standard spending assessments for *(a)* Humberside, *(b)* Berkshire, *(c)* Hampshire, *(d)* Kent and *(e)* Essex for (i) 1991-92, (ii) 1992-93 and (iii) 1993-94;

(2) if he will list the standard spending assessment for *(a)* Humberside, *(b)* Berkshire, *(c)* Hampshire, *(d)* Kent and *(e)* Essex for (i) 1992-93, and (ii) 1993-94 as a percentage of that for 1991-92, giving the reasons for any changes.

Mr. Robin Squire: The standard spending assessments for the authorities requested for the years 1991-92, 1992-93, 1992-93 adjusted for changes in function and 1993-94 are given in pounds million and in pounds per head of resident population.

Authority	*1991-92 £ million*	*1992-93 £ million*	*[1] 1992-93 £ million*	*1993-94 £ million*
Humberside	545·382	581·634	538·727	552·910
Berkshire	444·689	483·347	447·544	458·996
Hampshire	889·365	954·259	852·240	895·266
Kent	919·852	978·358	919·079	962·128
Essex	902·978	976·009	902·179	936·163

[1] Adjusted.

Pounds per head of resident population

Authority	*1991-92 £*	*1992-93 £*	*[1] 1992-93 £*	*1993-94 £*
Humberside	636·94	676·99	627·05	632·32
Berkshire	594·14	639·78	592·39	609·98
Hampshire	575·28	616·82	550·88	567·96
Kent	603·71	641·34	602·48	625·19
Essex	589·39	636·44	588·30	604·63

[1] Adjusted.

The 1992-93 and 1993-94 standard spending assessments as a percentage of the 1991-92 standard spending assessments for the authorities requested are as follows:

Authority	*£s million*		*£s per head*	
	1992-93	*1993-94*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Humberside	106·6	101·4	106·3	99·3
Berkshire	108·7	103·2	107·7	102·7
Hampshire	107·3	100·7	107·2	98·7
Kent	106·4	104·6	106·2	103·6
Essex	108·1	103·7	108·0	102·6

An authority's standard spending assessment is determined by various social, demographic and physical characteristics. Much of the variation in the ratios between these authorities for both 1992-93 and 1993-94 is due to indicator data changes, especially to the effect of incorporating data from the 1991 census. But the main influence for 1993-94 is the removal from local education authorities of responsibility for most aspects of further education.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give the average and median percentage increases in standard spending assessments for all local authorities in *(a)* Yorkshire and Humberside, *(b)* the south-east and *(c)* the northern region for 1993-94 over those for 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: The mean and median percentage increases in standard spending assessments from 1992-93, adjusted for changes in function, to 1993-94 for all local authorities, including metropolitan fire and police authorities, the receiver for the Metropolitan Police and the London fire and civil defence authority, for the regions requested are as follows:

Standard statistical region	*Mean per cent.*	*Median per cent.*
Yorkshire and Humberside	2·0	2·7
South East (including Greater London)	3·1	3·3
Northern	1·7	1·4

Local Government Finance

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment from what date, for the purposes of calculating receipts taken into account, local authorities are assumed to have had the use of 100 per cent. of capital receipts; when they actually had the use of 100 per cent. of capital receipts; what steps he will take to ensure that local authorities realising large capital receipts between those dates are not penalised by these rules; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: In issuing basic credit approvals—BCAs—to local authorities to support their capital expenditure in 1993-94, account was taken of a proportion of the usable capital receipts estimated to be available to them during that year. In this way, more of the available support could be directed to authorities with few receipts.

The BCAs for 1993-94 were issued on 22 December 1992, at which time neither we nor authorities knew how much each authority would have available in 1993-94 as usable receipts. Thus we could only make estimates.

For 1992-93, we based such estimates for each authority on the usable receipts brought forward from the

previous year, and those which the authority forecast it would obtain during the year. But we felt that it would not be fair to estimate usable receipts for 1993-94 on a similar basis, unless we made some additional allowance for the changes in the usable proportions of receipts which were announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement and which apply during the period from 13 November 1992 to 31 December 1993. With a few exceptions, the effect of these changes was to increase the usable proportion of capital receipts from council house sales from 25 to 100 per cent., and to increase the usable proportion of such receipts from other kinds of disposals from 50 to 100 per cent. Thus authorities' usable capital receipts in 1992-93 and 1993-94 will be increased as a result of the change but, for any given level of disposals, the increase will be greater for housing receipts.

We therefore asked authorities to estimate how much their usable receipts would have been in 1992-93 if the changes made in the autumn statement had applied throughout that year. These figures enabled us to make some allowance for the temporary change in the rules in our estimates of usable receipts in 1993-94 which we took into account in determining basic credit approvals.

We recognise that differences are bound to arise between the usable receipts actually available to authorities and those used in the calculation of the basic credit approvals. It would be possible to make an adjustment for such differences when calculating the receipts taken into account in future years. The local authority associations will be consulted on the alternatives which might be considered.

Heathrow Airport (Fifth Terminal)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will be holding a public inquiry into the planning application for a fifth terminal at Heathrow airport.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Business Rate Appeals

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a regional breakdown of the outstanding business rate appeals.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is given in the table.

Outstanding non-domestic rating appeals (end December 1992)

Region	*Appeals*
Northern	40,000
Yorkshire and Humberside	49,000
North West	50,000
East Midlands	23,000
West Midlands	36,000
East Anglia	16,000
London	130,000
South East (excluding London)	86,000
South West	30,000
Total	460,000

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with English local authorities and other eligible infrastructure-providing bodies concerning the levels of *(a)* base and *(b)* supplementary credit approvals with a view to the provision of matching Government funding to maximise successful applications for European regional development fund assistance.

Mr. Robin Squire: Consultations have been held with the local authority associations concerning methods of distributing supplementary credit approvals in 1993-94 and subsequent financial years to cover grants from the European regional development fund. As already announced, credit approvals will be available at a level of 100 per cent. to cover forecast ERDF receipts.

Noise

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to ensure compliance with the targets for night time noise exposure contained in the EC fifth action programme; if he will compile a national inventory of noise exposure levels; if he will set up a national noise abatement programme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The draft planning policy guidance note on "Planning and Noise" recommends a range of noise levels for each of four noise exposure categories. These include proposed levels for noise between the hours of 23.00 and 07.00 which are in line with the targets for night time noise contained in the EC fifth environment action programme. My Department has recently completed the national noise incidence study which involved noise measurements being made outside 1,000 homes in England and Wales during 1990 and has provided information on noise exposure levels. The results of the study will be published later this year. My Department's noise research programme also includes several projects which involve the measuring and monitoring of noise from various sources and developing ways in which exposure to noise can be reduced.

Defective Housing

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the payment of loan charge contributions to local authorities in England and Wales in respect of defective housing expenditure.

Mr. Baldry: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary amending legislation, my right hon. and learned Friend and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales propose to contribute to the loan charges payable in 1991-92 by local authorities in England and Wales as a result of the expenditure they incurred before 1 April 1989 in assisting owners of defective housing. The original power in section 569 of the Housing Act 1985 to make contributions in respect of such loan charges was inadvertently repealed in section 157 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Clauses 124 and 125 of the Housing and Urban Development Bill restore it. The purpose is to enable claims from local authorities for sums expected to total £16,777,221 in England and

£1,009,731 in Wales to be settled without delay. Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in the 1993-94 main estimates for the housing, England vote—class VII, vote 1—and the main estimates for the housing, other environmental services and welfare food, Wales vote—class XV, vote 6. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £17,786,952 will be met by repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund.

Contrary to Government accounting conventions, parliamentary approval was sought and given for this expenditure in the 1992-93 housing, England vote—class VIII, vote 1—and the 1992-93 housing, other environmental services and welfare food, Wales vote—class XVI, vote 6—in advance of the necessary amending legislation being put before the House. The provision in England of £18,101,000 for defective housing loan charges—subhead L4—and in Wales of £990,000—subhead F4—will not be used for any purpose, apart from settling late claims in respect of loan charges arising before 1 April 1991. Any such claims will continue to be settled through ex gratia payments under the arrangements announced in the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) on 15 January 1992 *Official Report*, column *576*.

Severn Estuary

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what requests he has received from the Environment Commissioner of the European Communities for a reasoned opinion on the Severn estuary designation as a special protection area under the 1979 wild birds directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 February 1993]:* None. The former Nature Conservancy Council's case for designation of the Severn estuary as a special protection area is under consideration within Government and the European Commission will be notified of the decision in due course.

PSA Building Management

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many writs were issued against PSA Building Management in 1991 and how many in 1992; how many of these were to secure payment of bills; and how these writs were spread between different regions.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* The Government have asked PSA to improve its performance in paying bills on time. No information is held centrally about the number of writs and I do not know the answer. The businesses now monitor prompt payment by payment cycles and I have asked for a monthly report on progress.

"Helping the Earth Begins at Home"

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints he has received about the "Helping the Earth" television and newspaper advertisements.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* Since the "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" campaign began in November 1991, two complaints have been put to my Department through the Advertising Standards Authority about press advertisements. The first of these complaints was upheld by the authority, the second was dropped.

One letter complaining about the campaign's television advertisement was recently forwarded to the Department by the Independent Television Commission and has now been answered. Four other written complaints have been received by my Department from members of the public regarding the campaign's press and other television advertisements.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 3 March 1993

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Charterline Telephone Service

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what budget he has set aside for the Charterline telephone information service he intends to set up in the east midlands pilot project; what charges will be made for the service; how it will be vetted to guarantee that it is politically impartial; and whether he will also fund other citizens' rights information lines which are not under his political control.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter unit is still negotiating the contract for this service. Revealing the budget would undermine the charter unit's negotiating position.

Callers will be charged at the local call rate for using the service. The service will direct callers to a contact in the public service organisation which is best placed to answer their query or deal with their complaint. It will therefore be a politically impartial service.

It would not be right to fund other independent information lines which might have other purposes than the provision of information about public service organisations.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

NATO

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the terms of the agreement for the forces of NATO to operate outside the areas previously agreed; and what measures are necessary to amend the North Atlantic treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: NATO Foreign Ministers agreed in June and December 1992 that the alliance should support, on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with its own procedures, peacekeeping operations under the auspices of the conference on security and co-operation in Europe or the United Nations. NATO Defence Ministers agreed in December that support for UN and CSCE peacekeeping should be among the missions of NATO forces and headquarters. Copies of the communiqués from all these meetings are in the Library of the House.

There is no need for the North Atlantic treaty to be amended to permit NATO to operate outside its own area in pursuit of these decisions; the treaty obliges members of the alliance to respond to an armed attack on one of them within the North Atlantic area, but it does not prevent NATO members from acting collectively outside the North Atlantic area if they so agree.

Taiwan

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on current relations with Taiwan.

Mr. Goodlad: For well-known reasons, diplomatic relations do not exist between the United Kingdom and Taiwan. There are many unofficial links, reflecting widespread recognition of Taiwan's growing economic weight. The Anglo-Taiwan trade committee and the Anglo-Taiwan education centre respectively promote commercial and educational exchanges. United Kingdom exports to Taiwan in 1992 totalled £545 million. There is scope for expanding business co-operation in many areas including financial services, investment and joint ventures —such as that between British Aerospace and Taiwan Aerospace Corporation. A new air link between the United Kingdom and Taiwan was recently announced.

EC Social Chapter

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what effect the non-incorporation of the opt-out on the social chapter in the Maastricht treaty into United Kingdom law would have on the competence of the European Court of Justice with regard to the rights of British workers and fair competition between United Kingdom companies and their continental counterparts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Non-incorporation of the protocol on social policy into United Kingdom law would have no effect on the competence of the ECJ to interpret the Treaty on European Union, including the clause of the protocol which states that

"Acts adopted by the Council . . . shall not be applicable to the United Kingdom".

Yugoslavia

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what informal or formal representatives from his Department attended the round table meeting held by UNESCO on 23 February in Paris to bring together artists, writers, journalists and ex-politicians from all sides of the ethnic divide in former Yugoslavia; and what assessment he has made of the effect of an application by the United Kingdom to rejoin UNESCO on such peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The round table was not attended by any United Kingdom representatives. We welcome Señor Mayor's initiative in organising the meeting. We have made no decision on a resumption of UNESCO membership. The work of UNESCO in this and other fields will obviously be taken into account in reaching any decision.

Council of Ministers

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the forthcoming business in the European Community's Council of Ministers.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The following meetings are planned:

2 March—Consumer Affairs Council

8 to 9 March—Foreign Affairs Council
15 March—Economic and Finance Council
15 March—Transport Council
16 to 17 March—Agriculture Council
18 March—Fisheries Council
22 to 23 March—Environment Council

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

(a) Consumer Affairs Council—2 March
Directive on unfair terms in consumer contracts
Directive on protection of purchasers of timeshares
Future action on labelling of products
Community system on information on accidents
Exchange of information on products which may jeopardise consumer health or safety
Action plan for consumer policy (1990-92)
Proposal for an EC Directive on Comparative advertising amending Directive 84/450/EEC concerning misleading advertising

(b) Foreign Affairs Council—8 to 9 March
Relations with Central and Eastern Europe
Association Agreement with Bulgaria
EEA—Protocol of adaptation
Cohesion Fund
Former Yugoslavia
GATT and other trade issues
Commercial Defence Instruments
FSU Textiles Agreement

(c) Economic and Finance Council—15 March
Annual Economic Report and national actions to promote economic recovery in Europe
Convergence programme for Greece (possible)
Carbon/Energy taxation
Progress report
Report of the Court of Auditors for 1991
Travellers' allowances

(d) Transport Council—15 March
Debate on Transport White Paper (11011/92)

Aviation
External relations (5080/90) (4146/93)
Computer reservation systems
Air traffic management equipment and systems (8420/92)

Land Transport
Transport Infrastructure Programme (1993-1994) (8065/92) (10437/92)
Trans European Networks:
Guidance for roads (8065/92)
Inland waterways (8065/92)
Combined transport (8066/92)
Fiscal harmonisation (heavy goods vehicles)
Road haulage cabotage (10038/91) (4943/92) (5334/92) (7662/92) (8315/92) (10855/92) (10881/92)
Transport agreement with Slovenia (5033/93)
Transport of dangerous goods (4954/93)
Road transport external relations (11234/92)

Maritime Transport
Maritime safety communication
Aviation agreement with Switzerland (possible)
Inland waterway external relations (possible)

(e) Agriculture Council—16-17 March
Price fixing proposals (Com(93) 36)
Milk quotas
GATT Agriculture
Processed tomatoes (10485/92; 4185/93)
Greek tobacco (possible)
Potatoes (possible) (10483/92; 4613/93)

(f) Fisheries Council—18 March
Control system for the Common Fisheries Policy (9019/92)
Spanish/Portuguese Accession (4158/93)
Harmonised technical conservation measures in the Mediterranean (11229/92)
High seas fisheries (possible)
Market situation of fisheries products
European fisheries research (possible)
Third country agreements (possible)

(g) Environment Council—22-23 March
ECO Audit regulation (5218/92)
CO2 monitoring decision (7569/92)
Carbon/Energy tax (7018/92)
Ratification of Climate Change Convention (11233/92)
Ratification of Biodiversity Convention (4593/93)
Volatile Organic Compounds emissions directive (VOCS) (Stage I) (8348/92)
Hazardous waste incineration directive (5761/92)
CITES regulation (10500/91)
Emissions from motor vehicles (4142/93)

The Consumer Affairs Council will meet on 2 March. The directive on unfair terms in consumer contracts will be discussed by Ministers in the hope that it may be adopted. Discussion will also focus on: a directive on the protection of purchasers of timeshares; future action on the labelling of products; the possible extension of the European home and leisure accident surveillance systems (EHLASS) for a further five years; the exchange of information on products which may jeopardise consumer health or safety and the action plan for consumer policy (1990-92). The proposal for an EC directive on comparative advertising, on subsidiarity grounds, will also be discussed by the Council.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 8 and 9 March. The Council will discuss the EC's relations with central and east European countries and sign an association agreement with Bulgaria. Ministers will be asked to agree a protocol of adaptation to the EEA agreement which would allow it to come into force without Switzerland. Ministers will than discuss the cohesion fund; former Yugoslavia; progress on the GATT negotiations; Commercial defence instruments and a textiles agreement with former Soviet Union states.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 15 March, when Ministers will consider formal adoption of the Commission's annual economic report. Further discussion will take place on actions to promote economic recovery in the Community and there is also expected to be a brief discussion of a progress report on the Commission's proposal for carbon/energy tax. The Council will examine the report of the Court of Auditors on the 1991 budget with a view to making a recommendation to the European Parliament on giving the Commission a discharge with respect to the implementation of the 1991 budget. Ministers may also discuss the economic convergence programme for Greece and increases in the current allowances for travellers from third countries.

The Transport Council will meet on 15 March. The Council will discuss aviation external relations and trans-European network guidelines. Other subjects for discussion by Ministers include: the transport infrastructure programme; inland waterways and combined transport; road freight fiscal harmonisation; road haulage cabotage; the transport of dangerous goods; road transport external relations and the transport agreement with Slovenia. Additional aviation items include: computer reservation systems and air traffic management equipment and systems. Ministers may also discuss inland waterway external relations and a proposed aviation

agreement with Switzerland. There will also be a Commission presentation on the maritime safety communication.

The Agricultural Council will meet on 16 and 17 March. Ministers will discuss the 1993-94 price-fixing proposals; milk quotas; the agricultural aspects of the GATT negotiations and processed tomatoes. They may also discuss Greek tobacco and the review of the potato regime.

The Fisheries Council is due to meet on 18 March. Ministers will discuss the proposed control and enforcement regulation; review of the accession arrangements for Spain and Portugal; harmonised technical conservation measures in the Mediterranean and the market situation for fisheries products. They may also discuss the Community policy on high seas fishing; European fisheries research and negotiating mandate for a fisheries agreement with the Russian Federation.

The Environment Council will meet on 22 and 23 March, when Ministers hope to reach agreement on the ECO-audit regulation, the volatile organis compounds (Stage 1) emissions directive, the CO_2 monitoring decision and ratification of the climate change convention. The Council will also discuss: carbon/energy tax; ratification of the biodiversity convention; the hazardous waste incineration directive and the CITES regulation. The Commission will present its communication on marine pollution and may make presentations on substances that deplete the ozone layer (hydrochlorofluorocarbons and methyl bromide) and emissions from motor vehicles.

Sub-Saharan Africa

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are currently undertaken by the Overseas Development Administration to reduce debt burdens of countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Nelson: I have been asked to reply.

It is Government policy to cancel the debts of those very poor and indebted countries which are successfully pursuing sound policies of reform. So far, nearly £200 million of old aid debt has been cancelled in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and other countries will benefit as they fulfil the qualifications for this treatment. All new aid to very poor countries is now given only in the form of grant aid.

Those debt-distressed countries which do not qualify for aid debt cancellation may apply to have their debts rescheduled through the Paris Club, composed of the major creditor Governments. The Paris Club is prepared to reschedule aid debt over long periods at highly concessional rates of interest. The effect of this is to increase greatly the grant element of the loans concerned, so producing a very substantial reduction in the present value of the obligation to repay.

Many of these countries owe most of their official debt to export credit agencies rather than to aid agencies. That is why the United Kingdom proposed the comprehensive Trinidad terms initiative for reducing the debts of the very poorest and severely indebted countries. So far, over $3 billion has been consolidated under these agreements in sub-Saharan Africa by the Paris Club, cancelling over $1 billion during the lifetime of the agreements.

TRANSPORT

Lorries

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he will publish his consultation paper on heavier lorries for combined road and rail transport.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend has published the paper today. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Drink Driving

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he has issued to road safety officers concerning the role of children in getting across to adults the "don't drink and drive" message; and if he will make it his policy that all "don't drink and drive" advertisements on television sponsored by his Department are transmitted during hours when children are likely to be viewing.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have not given specific advice to road safety officers, although they are involved in the planning of our drink-drive campaigns.

We aim to show our television commercials to as wide an audience as possible and recognise that children have an important role in influencing the attitudes of adults. Surveys have shown that children's views against drinking and driving have been reinforced by watching the commercials. The final decision on when commercials can be transmitted rests with the Independent Television Commission.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has undertaken into impairment caused by alcohol to the driving of young or infrequent drinkers.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There has been no specific research into this subject in the United Kingdom. International research suggests that young drivers and infrequent drinkers are more likely to be impaired at lower alcohol levels, but there is considerable variability between individuals at all ages.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will seek to amend the Road Traffic Act 1988 so as to reduce the alcohol limit in Britain to 50 mg/100 ml and to include random breath tests.

Mr. Carlisle: No. The current limit of 80 mg/100 ml is scientifically based at the level at which, for most people, the chance of being involved in an accident starts to rise sharply. More than half of all drink-drive offenders are convicted at twice this limit. Lowering the legal limit and introducing random breath tests would risk directing resources away from this group of high risk offenders.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received to lower the legal unit of alcohol in the breath and blood for tests carried out by the police; and what information he has as to the legal limits set by other countries.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We receive representations from time to time from road safety organisations and from members of the public. The best information we have on legal limits for drinking and driving in other countries is for other European Community member states, a majority of which share the same legal limit as the United Kingdom.

Shipping (Dangerous Cargoes)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research contracts his Department has let into measures for controlling the routes of ships carrying dangerous or polluting cargoes while they are in British waters; and what plans he has for future research.

Mr. Norris: A contract was let in 1989 to assess shipping movements along the west coast of Scotland since the deep water route to the west of the Hebrides was implemented.

The Department is also involved in the European Community project "Euret", which is directed at the development of vessel traffic systems.

Roads Maintenance

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much money was transferred from the highway maintenance standard spending assessment to the highways structural maintenance elements of transport supplementary grant in the settlement for 1993-94; how much of that sum has been allocated for structural maintenance on principal roads and how much for Bridge strengthening; and what was the amount of local authority expenditure on structural maintenance on principal roads in 1992-93.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: For 1993-94 a further £120 million has been transferred from revenue support grant to the transport supplementary grant system to cover structural maintenance on carriageways of principal roads. This followed two previous transfers, £90 million in 1991-92 for assessment, strengthening and other structural maintenance on bridges and £100 million in 1992-93 for carriageways of roads on the primary route network.

Of the £310 million transferred, £172·8 million has been allocated in 1993-94 for structural maintenance on carriageways of principal roads, and £137·2 million for assessment, strengthening and other structural maintenance of bridges.

For 1993-94 local highways authorities may switch resources between bridges and carriageways according to local priority.

The amount of local authority expenditure on structural maintenance on principal roads in 1992-93 is not yet available. Local highway authorities have budgeted to spend £119 million on these roads in 1992-93.

Road Improvements

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the location, cost and duration of the road improvement schemes funded by his Department in the city of Westminster since 1979.

Mr. Norris: My Department was not directly responsible for funding road improvements in the city of Westminster prior to 1986. No major improvement schemes have been carried out on trunk roads in the city since then. We have supported a number of local road improvements through transport supplementary grant.

Channel Tunnel

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he received the proposals for a channel tunnel rail link from Union Rail; and when he proposes to publish them.

Mr. Freeman: A report from Union Railways on options for refining the route of the channel tunnel rail link was received on 11 January 1993. The Government will announce as soon as possible a route for consultation, together with information on the options put to Ministers by Union Railways.

British Rail

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account is taken of British Rail's capital requirements to maintain the network in setting the public spending total for the Department of Transport.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail's capital requirement is one of the most important factors taken into account in setting the Department's public spending allocation.

Cyclists (Safety Helmets)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to make compulsory the wearing of safety helmets by children on bicycles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have no plans to make compulsory the wearing of cycle helmets by child cyclists. We must ensure that children and parents are fully aware of the very significant improvement in safety that helmets give. This has been the subject of recent publicity by the Department and will be an important element of our forthcoming cycling safety campaign.

Railway Lines (Wales)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement regarding the future of the Aberystwyth-Shrewsbury and Machynlleth-Pwllheli railway lines.

Mr. Freeman: The level of service provided on these lines is currently a matter for British Rail. In due course, that responsibility will be assumed by the franchising director.

Ashford International Station

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an announcement about the proposed Ashford international station.

Mr. Freeman: The public expenditure settlement for 1993-94 allows for British Rail to undertake urgent track and signalling works for the proposed Ashford international passenger station. What exactly needs to be provided is still under discussion and I shall write to my hon. Friend as soon as decisions have been reached.

Red Routes

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the figure for accidents and casualties on the Archway road red route pilot and for the pilot corridor in 1991; and if he will instigate an independent inquiry of the pilot study.

Mr. Norris: I have no plans to instigate an inquiry. Independent monitoring of the pilot red route has already been carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory.

The following figures are for the periods of 18 months before and after the introduction of the scheme in January 1991.

	Pilot route			Pilot route corridor		
	Before	After	Change per cent.	Before	After	Change per cent.
Accidents	701	626	−11	1,008	857	−15
Casualties	788	683	−13	1,132	951	−16

Notes:
(1) The above figures were taken from the London Accident Analysis Unit's database in November 1992. Accidents occurring 50 metres either side of major junctions, or on minor side roads within 50 metres of the centre line of the main road, have been allocated to the main road.
(2) City Road has been excluded from the table because the London Borough of Islington never implemented the red route controls there.
(3) The normal requirement for the analysis of accident statistics is a three year period. We have provided figures over the shorter period because of the particular public interest in this project.

Agencies, Swansea

Mr. Alan Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what consideration was given to including, in the advertisement placed in the *Official Journal* of the European Community for the sale of DVOIT, a requirement that it must remain in Swansea;

(2) if he will make a statement on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to the proposed privatisation of DVOIT in Swansea.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that the advertisement for the privatisation of the Department of Transport agencies based in Swansea will specify that the privatised facilities should remain in the Swansea area.

Mr. MacGregor *[holding answer 10 February 1993]:* I am advised that the proposed privatisation of DVOIT by means of a sale to a private sector company will be a transfer within the terms of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. Future location options for DVOIT will be a matter for prospective purchasers of the agency to consider.

EDUCATION

Grant-maintained Schools

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools *(a)* did and *(b)* did not receive a capital allocation named grant in each of the last three years.

Mr. Forth: The information is shown in the table for the financial years 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Self-governing schools: named project capital allocations

Year	(a) Number of schools with named project allocations	(b) Number of schools without named project allocations
1990-91	27	2
1991-92	34	31
1992-93	92	74

Note: The figures in column *(b)* relate to the number of self-governing schools eligible to bid in that year's named project capital funding round.

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in how many ballots for grant-maintained status the Electoral Reform Society has reported to him that improper conduct and procedure had taken place.

Mr. Forth: Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd. reports the factual results of ballots to the governing body of the school concerned and to the Department. From time to time the Department receives complaints about improper conduct or procedure in a ballot. If these require investigation, Electoral Reform (Ballot Services) Ltd. may be asked for its comments.

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total capital expenditure named projects grant, for grant-maintained schools in each of the last three years; and how many grant-maintained schools there were in each of these years.

Mr. Forth: The information is shown in the following table. Final outturn figures for 1992-93 are not yet available as expenditure is still being incurred by schools.

Self-governing schools: Named project outturn expenditure

Year	Expenditure[1] on named projects (£ thousands)	Number of schools in sector[2]
1990-91	5,835	29
1991-92	7,485	65

[1] Expenditure figures relate to spending by schools on named projects awarded allocations in each year listed and excludes expenditure on projects started in earlier programme years.
[2] The figures relate to the number of self-governing schools *eligible to bid* in each year's named project capital funding round.

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many ballots for grant-maintained status he has ordered to be re-run; and what were the reasons for these orders.

Mr. Forth: Four ballots have been declared void and required to be re-run to date. In each case, the grounds for the decision were errors in the ballot arrangements.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what measures he has taken to notify parents about grant-maintained schools; how much these measures have cost in each financial year; and what further expenditure is planned.

Mr. Forth: Information specifically for parents about grant-maintained schools is set out in "Grant Maintained Schools: Questions Parents Ask" and through the telephone helpline.

The printing costs of "Questions Parents Ask" in the financial years from 1989-90 to 1991-92 totalled £40,000. It is not possible to disaggregate this information further without incurring disproportionate cost. Printing costs this year are estimated at £60,000. Distribution costs fall within the terms of the contract with the Departmental despatch centre and cannot be identified separately. Expenditure in 1993-94 has been planned on the basis of current demand.

The GM helpline for parents is a pilot scheme which will run to the end of March. Decisions about extending this service will be made at that time. The estimated cost for the six week pilot is £225,000 which covers the running of the telephone helpline and publicising the availability of the service in the national press and magazines.

English

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if his departmental advisers on the teaching of English to 14-year-olds will meet representative heads of departments from London's secondary schools for discussions on coursework, assessment and curriculum issues.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is advised on curriculum issues by the National Curriculum Council and on assessment issues by the School Examinations and Assessment Council. It is for those bodies to respond to any requests for meetings put to them.

Educational Equipment (Exports)

Sir Malcolm Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which Minister in his Department is responsible for promoting the export of educational equipment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: I am responsible within the Department for Education for educational exports. The Department provides support to companies wishing to export educational equipment, while the British Council has responsibility for promoting the export of education and training services, a field in which it is especially active.

Truancy

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement itemising the main details and purpose of each scheme he is funding under the grants for education support and training programme 1993-94 to deal with truancy; and if he will provide the same information for schemes whose proposals were presented to him which have not been funded.

Mr. Forth: Proposals submitted by local education authorities (LEAs) under the reducing truancy programme of the grants for education support and training (GEST) scheme 1993-94 took a variety of forms. Bidding was competitive, with priority being given to those LEAs where the problems were most severe. Individual bids were assessed according to the extent to which they:

clearly identified the scale of need at the schools designated;
demonstrated an innovative and well thought out strategy for tackling truancy/unauthorised absence;
provided a clear statement of objectives, together with performance indicators against which the effectiveness of provision could be measured;
made appropriate use of the experience and expertise of the Education Welfare Service; and
were based on, and furthered, good practice.

On that basis, projects to a total value of £9·6 million were approved in 74 LEAs. Eight projects were rejected.

Schools Expenditure, Cambridgeshire

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the capital expenditure on state schools in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984 in *(a)* nursery schools, *(b)* primary schools and *(c)* secondary schools.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the information requested.

Capital spending by Cambridgeshire LEA on schools in each year since 1984

£ thousands

	Nursery and primary schools	*Secondary schools*
1984-85	1,674	3,240
1985-86	2,127	3,947
1986-87	2,011	3,127
1987-88	5,699	3,686
1988-89	8,697	6,511
1989-90	11,582	9,045
1990-91	8,203	5,625
1991-92	8,758	11,929

Notes:
1. Figures for 1991-92 are provisional.
2. Capital expenditure on nursery and primary schools is not identified separately in the returns made by local authorities.
3. Spending on special schools is omitted.

Special Needs Education

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many children of *(a)* primary age and *(b)* secondary age, (i) in each local authority area and (ii) in total have been statemented in each of the last five years.

Mr. Forth: Separate information on primary and secondary age children for whom a statement of special educational needs has been made is not available. Information on the numbers of children of all ages for whom statements of special educational needs were made for the first time during each of the calendar years 1987 to 1991, the latest year for which information is available, in each local education authority in England is given in the table.

Children for whom statements of special education needs were made for the first time in LEAs in England 1987 to 1991

Local education authority	*Calendar year* 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
ILEA	968	1,103	[1]490	1,368	n/a
City	—	—	—	—	2
Camden	—	—	—	—	171
Greenwich	—	—	—	—	161

Local education authority	Calendar year 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Hackney	—	—	—	—	123
Hammersmith	—	—	—	—	64
Islington	—	—	—	—	57
Kensington	—	—	—	—	40
Lambeth	—	—	—	—	103
Lewisham	—	—	—	—	55
Southwark	—	—	—	—	174
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	—	137
Wandsworth	—	—	—	—	112
Westminster	—	—	—	—	111
Barking	30	50	54	65	73
Barnet	87	53	101	85	129
Bexley	122	120	183	204	257
Brent	290	93	80	37	81
Bromley	159	135	124	132	97
Croydon	207	121	132	119	109
Ealing	78	126	108	137	169
Enfield	32	43	22	19	31
Haringey	57	61	50	73	108
Harrow	94	91	73	75	96
Havering	111	77	62	106	136
Hillingdon	35	47	108	73	46
Hounslow	169	170	234	238	95
Kingston-upon-Thames	44	60	70	76	76
Merton	150	92	71	88	62
Newham	51	81	131	101	154
Redbridge	74	92	77	82	117
Richmond-upon-Thames	83	75	87	69	76
Sutton	100	91	101	108	98
Waltham Forest	63	52	51	97	74
Birmingham	526	361	325	335	496
Coventry	158	143	120	151	146
Dudley	135	135	168	193	191
Sandwell	156	152	120	51	88
Solihull	106	110	104	127	128
Walsall	138	86	166	153	159
Wolverhampton	133	146	87	160	148
Knowsley	147	130	133	202	169
Liverpool	118	151	365	618	435
St. Helens	27	146	151	136	122
Sefton	122	130	96	186	179
Wirral	138	294	235	133	145
Bolton	97	93	97	109	121
Bury	153	170	157	164	168
Manchester	114	165	162	112	135
Oldham	80	110	207	210	89
Rochdale	119	124	154	157	78
Salford	52	62	48	61	18
Stockport	226	199	163	244	225
Tameside	97	203	184	124	148
Trafford	167	97	133	125	77
Wigan	104	2	188	303	388
Barnsley	44	34	45	95	122
Doncaster	154	135	162	162	142
Rotherham	215	171	155	305	301
Sheffield	145	160	105	128	197
Bradford	111	94	100	75	145
Calderdale	70	72	50	45	59
Kirklees	289	191	243	249	347
Leeds	124	687	351	311	441
Wakefield	139	107	166	93	202
Gateshead	22	43	56	85	198
Newcastle upon Tyne	132	155	131	103	154
North Tyneside	123	129	167	178	169
South Tyneside	105	86	97	74	70
Sunderland	104	139	170	148	263
Isles of Scilly	0	0	0	0	0
Avon	487	682	603	333	450
Bedfordshire	264	248	264	284	329
Berkshire	262	322	421	504	716
Buckinghamshire	401	498	484	716	568
Cambridgeshire	49	296	90	111	340
Cheshire	487	620	575	566	720
Cleveland	277	333	420	359	353
Cornwall	231	263	419	245	426
Cumbria	227	166	155	322	323
Derbyshire	495	633	587	742	594

Local education authority	Calendar year 1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Devon	586	632	847	793	924
Dorset	345	198	247	287	341
Durham	227	265	219	204	308
East Sussex	203	261	180	247	211
Essex	808	800	778	627	613
Gloucestershire	274	300	247	278	433
Hampshire	920	950	1,038	1,034	1,686
Hereford and Worcestershire	133	192	242	397	417
Hertfordshire	463	462	580	584	741
Humberside	193	267	255	211	483
Isle of Wight	63	56	45	46	68
Kent	700	549	595	953	983
Lancashire	810	968	1,269	1,124	1,305
Leicestershire	268	389	486	465	587
Lincolnshire	254	383	354	665	687
Norfolk	492	407	551	508	500
North Yorkshire	394	247	296	397	437
Northamptonshire	229	277	297	230	357
Nothumberland	164	170	142	161	185
Nottinghamshire	233	327	264	218	153
Oxfordshire	95	88	132	144	263
Shropshire	311	364	234	434	480
Somerset	309	426	244	169	161
Staffordshire	586	538	606	639	666
Suffolk	475	454	522	387	435
Surrey	848	701	953	497	1,178
Warwickshire	282	269	315	249	244
West Sussex	264	262	177	267	350
Wiltshire	405	509	530	665	775
ENGLAND	22,408	24,017	24,633	26,519	30,847

[1] Incomplete return.
—= Not available.

Access Funds

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many higher education institutions have requested additional funds for their access fund from his Department during the present academic year.

Mr. Boswell: Access funds are allocated to higher education institutions through the funding councils at the beginning of the academic year. Institutions are aware that once allocations are made no additional funds are available.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the access fund for the University of Manchester in 1992-93.

Mr. Boswell: The Universities Funding Council allocated £365,270 to Manchester university, including £24,440 for the Manchester business school, as the university's share of the access funds for the academic year 1992-93.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the operation of the higher education institution access funds for 1992-93.

Mr. Boswell: It is too early to say how the scheme is progressing in the current academic year. The funding councils are asked to submit an annual report to the Department on the use of the funds by institutions after the end of each year.

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 2 July 1992, *Official Report*, column *659*, how many higher education institutions have none of their 1992-93 access fund moneys left.

Mr. Boswell: This information is not held centrally. We have advised institutions, through the funding councils, to consider holding back some of their access funds and to make arrangements to meet requests for assistance late in the academic year and during the summer vacation.

Student Loans

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many county court judgments were secured against students during *(a)* September 1992 to December 1992 and *(b)* January 1993 to February 1993 by the Student Loans Company.

Mr. Boswell: This is a matter for the Student Loans Company. I will ask the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Illiteracy

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much Her Majesty's Government have spent on tackling illiteracy in each of the last five years.

Mr. Boswell: It is for local education authorities to determine their level of expenditure on adult literacy provision. Government funding over the last five years of the adult literacy and basic skills unit, which is the central organisation for advice and research into adult literacy, was as in the following table.

	£ million
1988-89	2·3
1989-90	2·4
1990-91	2·7
1991-92	3·0
1992-93	3·2

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* adults and *(b)* children who are (i) illiterate or (ii) functionally illiterate in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Boswell: There are very few adults in the United Kingdom who are completely illiterate in the sense that they cannot read or write at all. The adult literacy and basic skills unit, which advises the Government, estimates that 4 million adults in England and Wales have real difficulty coping with everyday tasks like filling in forms; and a further 1·5 million are reckoned to have difficulty with numerical skills. Such people are often described as being "functionally illiterate", although there is no standard definition of that term. ALBSU has however recently developed a common set of standards for communication and numeracy. These standards describe competence levels in reading, writing, number and oral communication skills. They have been mapped against both the national curriculum and the communication and numeracy units in the new general national vocational qualifications. Better information on the incidence and level of these difficulties will become available as these standards are more widely applied.

It is impossible to provide comparable figures for children, since the rate at which individual children acquire and master literacy skills varies. The testing and assessment arrangements being introduced under the national curriculum will in future provide parents and teachers with clear information about children's reading and writing standards.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research into the problems of illiteracy has been financed by his Department in each of the last five years; and at what cost.

Mr. Boswell: The adult literacy and basic skills unit, which is funded by the Government to advise on, and conduct research into, adult literacy, has conducted extensive research over the last five years. I will write to the hon. Member shortly with details of the cost of that research.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps are being taken to tackle the problem of illiteracy in British industry and commerce; and at what cost.

Mr. Boswell: The Department for Education, the Department of Employment and the Welsh Office are jointly funding an initiative on basic skills involving employers and training and enterprise councils. The basic skills at work programme has funded surveys of need and provision and is now funding pilot projects to explore new methods of providing vocationally-related basic skills training, for those in or out of work. The initiative will cost about £3 million over three years. In addition, many firms offer basic skills training independently.

Mr. Fisher: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment has been made of the cost to British industry and commerce of illiteracy in each of the last five years.

Mr. Boswell: The adult literacy and basic skills unit, which is funded by the Government, is currently conducting research into this question. The results of that research are expected to be available in early April.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

London Marathon

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what fee it is proposed to charge the organisers of the London marathon for use of *(a)* St. James's park and *(b)* Greenwich park for the London marathon in 1993; and what is the basis for the charge.

Mr. Key: The London marathon is being asked to pay £15,000 for the use of the royal parks in 1993. This charge is based on the area utilised and the period of the event.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his Department's policy in relation to the Sports Council's policy of sport for all; and how that policy is interpreted in relation to the London marathon.

Mr. Key: The Department supports the Sports Council's policy of sport for all. This is entirely consistent with charging a fee for use of the royal parks for the London marathon.

Greenwich Park

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage on how many occasions in the past five years a cultural, sporting or entertainment event has been held in Greenwich park which has been organised by a private, voluntary or commercial organisation, Government Department or other statutory body, apart from letting of sports pitches; what was the nature of the event in each case; what were the estimated additional costs to the Department of the Environment or the Department of National Heritage for each letting; what was the fee levied; and what was the basis of the charge.

Mr. Key: Apart from the London marathon, only minor local events have been held in Greenwich park. These minor events involved the Department in no additional costs and no charge was levied. For that reason, no records have been kept of the individual events.

National Lottery

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to ensure that there will be equal opportunities for disabled people when employees are recruited for the national lottery.

Mr. Key: The organisation licensed to run the national lottery will be a company in the private sector, bound by the terms of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Acts 1944 and 1958.

The Office of the National Lottery, headed by the Director General, will like other regulatory bodies be a non-ministerial Government Department. Its staff will be civil servants or engaged on conditions analogous to those of civil servants. The civil service is an equal opportunity employer and all applications for employment are considered on their merits.

Tourist Boards

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what the total funds were for the national tourist boards in England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland

for the last five years; what the projected funds are for the next three years; if he will show those figures per head of adult resident population, in real terms at current prices; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The following table shows the funds provided to each of the national tourist boards over the last five years; the estimated outturn for the current year; planned totals for the next three years; and the amount spent per head of adult resident population in each year at current prices. Allocations to the national tourist boards reflect the differing circumstances and priorities in each country; direct comparisons are therefore misleading.

Assistance to National Tourist Boards: Grant in Aid and Tourist Projects, Gross Expenditure

	1988-89 Outturn	*1989-90 Outturn*	*1990-91 Outturn*	*1991-92 Outturn*	*1992-93 Estimate*	*1993-94 Plans*	*1994-95 Plans*	*1995-96 Plans*
English Tourist Board								
Cash £ million terms	25·80	21·80	17·20	15·70	16·10	14·00	10·80	9·00
£ per head current prices	0·86	0·68	0·49	0·42	0·41	0·35	0·26	0·21
Scottish Tourist Board								
Cash £ million terms	9·90	11·10	12·10	12·70	13·60	13·50	13·90	14·20
£ per head current prices	3·07	3·23	3·25	3·20	3·28	3·17	3·15	3·14
Wales Tourist Board								
Cash £ million terms	9·30	9·90	10·60	11·30	13·70	13·80	13·70	13·80
£ per head current prices	5·15	5·12	5·06	5·06	5·87	5·75	5·52	5·39
Northern Ireland Tourist Board								
Cash £ million terms	5·40	5·70	7·40	7·10	11·70	11·90	11·30	11·50
£ per head current prices	6·00	5·90	7·06	6·26	9·79	9·59	8·74	8·60

Note: Population figures underlying per head calculations based on those aged 15 or over at mid-year for England, Scotland and Wales, and those aged 16 or over for Northern Ireland.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Chlor-alkali Manufacture

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the effect of the reallocation of electricity costs, the new pool tariff, on chlor-alkali manufacture.

Mr. Eggar: The Government are in dialogue with large electricity users about electricity prices, and this issue is among those that are being considered by the coal review. Any proposals would need to benefit all customers with appropriate circumstances.

Coal Research Establishment

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has for future funding of the Coal Research Establishment.

Mr. Eggar: The future funding of clean coal technology and the role of Coal Research Establishment in developing this technology is under discussion as part of our work on the coal review.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last visited the Coal Research Establishment.

Mr. Eggar: I have not visited the Coal Research Establishment. However, my chief scientific adviser on science and technology visited the establishment on 29 January 1993.

Export Licences

Mrs. Lait: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans there are to harmonise the system of export licences across the European Community.

Mr. Needham: On 31 August 1992 the Commission of the European Communities adopted a proposal for the Council regulation on the control of exports of certain dual-use goods and technologies and of certain nuclear products and technologies.

The proposed regulation aims to provide a framework for common export controls to be applied by member states to dual-use and nuclear goods leaving the territory of the European Community, and for the harmonisation of export licensing systems. Member states are continuing to discuss Commission proposals in a Council high level working group set up for this purpose.

Mrs. Lait: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consider introducing a system of blanket export licences on the line of that operating in the Netherlands.

Mr. Needham: The United Kingdom already operates a system of open general export licences—OGELs—which are similar to the global export licences issued in the Netherlands. An open general export licence is a general authorisation permitting the export of a range of controlled goods to a range of destinations without the need for prior application to the Department of Trade and Industry. Its use is subject to compliance with the conditions of the licence. There are currently eight open general export licences in force.

Corporate Communications plc

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from the Public Relations Consultants Association about the collapse of Corporate Communications plc; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A letter on this subject has been received from the Public Relations Consultants Association. My officials replied to that letter on 1 March 1993.

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what action his Department is taking to ensure that the United Kingdom complies with the additionality criteria for European Community structural funds; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what efforts his Department is making to account for European Community structural funds receipts transparently; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: Public expenditure arrangements take account of receipts from the structural funds when departmental programmes are set. My Department is responsible for providing public expenditure cover for forecast European regional development fund receipts for projects which fall within my Department's ambit. For the next financial year some £60 million of provision has been made, and in accordance with the agreement with the European Commission reached in February last year, this is reflected more transparently in the departmental report, which was laid in the House of Common's Library on 10 February 1993.

Pit Closures

Mr. Clapham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take steps to ensure that miners working at the 21 pits in the coal review will not be financially disadvantaged by remaining in employment until the House has completed consideration of the closure proposals.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 26 February, *Official Report*, column *773*.

Mineworkers (Redundancy)

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the present enhanced redundancy scheme for mineworkers ceases; and what discussions he has had with the chairman of British Coal about extending it.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Pennistone (Mr. Clapham) on 26 February, *Official Report*, column *773*.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements he has made to provide expedited approval procedures for European regional development fund assistance for schemes to enable early approvals to be gained to provide an incentive for infrastructure schemes to be carried out by local authorities and other eligible infrastructure-providing bodies.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend has made no such arrangements. The possibility of ERDF assistance should be incentive enough to local authorities and other bodies to seek early approval for schemes which may qualify for grant. Applications must be appraised to ensure that they give value for money.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of the United Kingdom's share of the European regional development fund for 1992-93 has been allocated.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* It is not possible to derive figures for the allocation of only the 1992-93 part of the United Kingdom's share of the European regional development fund, many of the programmes span longer periods.

Approximately two thirds of the United Kingdom's share of the fund for the present period of the regulations from 1989-93 has been allocated.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the negotiations with the European Community Commissioner for Regional Affairs in relation to the achievement of *(a)* transparency, *(b)* additionality and *(c)* sequential causality in the approval procedures for assistance from the European regional development fund from United Kingdom local authorities and other eligible bodies.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* In accordance with the appropriate Community regulations, receipts from the European regional development fund are taken into account in setting departmental expenditure programmes.

The Government will implement from the beginning of the next financial year new arrangements to improve the transparency of the public expenditure treatment of these receipts, as agreed with the Commission.

A number of meetings have taken place at official level to explain to the Commission progress on these new arrangements, which are at present being finalised.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what consultations he has had with local authorities and their associations and other eligible infrastructure-providing bodies in relation to the impact of the approval of areas of Britain for European regional development fund objective 1 status on the availability of funds for areas with objective 2 status.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* None. it was only on 24 February that the Commission adopted a proposed list of objective 1 regions for the period 1994 to 1999 which included the Highlands and Islands and Merseyside, as well as Northern Ireland whose objective 1 status was confirmed by the European Council at Edinburgh. The final decisions on which regions will be eligible for objective 1 rests with the Council of Ministers in the context of the review of the structural fund regulations.

Carpet Trade

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the tariff levels of United Kingdom exports of carpets, headings 5702 and 5703, to *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* South Africa, *(c)* Australia, *(d)* Turkey, including additional duties, *(e)* India, *(f)* Pakistan, *(g)* Thailand and *(h)* Malaysia together with any non-tariff barriers which apply and the tariff level for imports of that product from the same countries into the Community.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 February 1993]:* The tariff information is as follows:

United States of America
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 0 to 10 per cent.
Additional duties: None
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 4 to 14 per cent.

South Africa
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 20 to 30 per cent.
Additional duties: Surcharge of 15 to 40 per cent.
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 4 to 14 per cent.

Australia
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 0 or 32 per cent. (due to be reduced to 15 per cent. by year 2000)
Additional duties: None
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 4 to 14 per cent.

Turkey
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 6·5 per cent.
Additional duties: $100/sq metres if of wool/fine animal hair
$600/sq metres if of silk
$15/sq metres if of other materials
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 4 to 14 per cent.

India
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 65 per cent.
Additional duties: None
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 4 to 14 per cent.

Pakistan
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 90 per cent. but banned unless synthetic for hockey pitches
Additional duties: 12·5 per cent. sales tax
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 4 to 14 per cent.

Thailand
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 30 to 100 per cent.
Additional duties: None
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 4 to 14 per cent.

Malaysia
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 5 to 40 per cent.
Additional duties: 10 per cent. sales tax
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 4 to 14 per cent.

Knitwear

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the tariff levels for United Kingdom exports of sweaters, heading 6110, to *(a)* the United States of America, *(b)* South Africa, *(c)* Australia, *(d)* Turkey, including additional duties, *(e)* India, *(f)* Pakistan, *(g)* Thailand and *(h)* Malaysia together with non-tariff barriers which apply and the tariff level for imports of that product from the same countries into the Community.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 23 February 1993]:* The tariff information is as follows:

United States of America
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 5 to 34·2 per cent.
Additional duties: None
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 10·5 to 14 per cent.

South Africa
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 100 per cent.
Additional duties: Surcharge of 15 per cent.
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 10·5 to 14 per cent.

Australia
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 47 per cent. (due to be reduced 25 per cent. by year 2000)
Additional duties: None
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 10·5 to 14 per cent.

Turkey
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 7·6 per cent.
Additional duties: 21 per cent. of CIF value for housing fund
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 10·5 to 14 per cent.

India
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 65 per cent.
Additional duties: None
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 10·5 to 14 per cent.

Pakistan
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 90 per cent. but banned
Additional duties: 12·5 per cent.
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 10·5 to 14 per cent.

Thailand
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 100 per cent.
Additional duties: None
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 10·5 to 14 per cent.

Malaysia
Import duty imposed on United Kingdom exports: 25 per cent.
Additional duties: 10 per cent. sales tax and 5 per cent. surtax
Duty imposed on imports into EC: 10·5 to 14 per cent.

Overseas Trade

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the net total direct expenditure in terms of assistance to exporters made by the Overseas Trade Board in the latest year for which figures are available; what was the net cost of the provision of overseas trade services in that year; and what percentage the latter figure represents of the former.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The total cost of the overseas trade services export promotion programme in 1991-92 was £173·4 millions gross, £127·3 millions of which was the cost (including overheads) of the staff involved (including FCO commercial staff overseas and export sections of Territorial Departments).

Direct expenditure on export promotion schemes and services was £46·1 millions gross (£27·9 millions net of receipts). Details are given in the annual report of the British Overseas Trade Board.

Takeover Bids

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many formal recommendations he has received from the current Director General of Fair Trading since his appointment; and how many have concerned hostile takeover bids for publicly quoted companies.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The Director General of Fair Trading has made recommendations in respect of 95 merger cases since his appointment. There is no agreed definition of a hostile takeover bid. However, I understand that there have been five cases involving publicly quoted companies where the management of the target company has recommended rejecting the bid.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what requests have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the European Commission to provide the economic assessment of COM(92) 520 final on transport of radioactive substances in the European communities, as mentioned at paragraph 12 of explanatory memorandum 11035/92.

Mr. McLoughlin: I have been asked to reply.

As stated in the explanatory memorandum, the European Commission has been asked to provide an economic assessment. Its response has been that this is not a significant proposal which requires a cost compliance assessment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what action his Department is taking to ensure that the United Kingdom complies with the additionality criteria for European Community structural funds; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what efforts his Department is making to account for European Community structural funds receipts transparently; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Article 9 of Council Regulation (EEC) No. 4253/88 requires that the

"increase in the appropriations for the Funds provided for in Article 12(2) of Regulation (EEC) No. 2052/88 has a genuine additional economic impact in the regions concerned and results in at least an equivalent increase in the total volume of official and similar (Community and national) structural aid in the Member State concerned".

Accordingly, our public expenditure arrangements take account of Community receipts from the structural funds when departmental programmes are set.

From the beginning of the next financial year, the Government will implement new arrangements agreed with the Commission to improve the transparency of the public expenditure treatment of European regional development fund receipts. Details of these new arrangements were set out in a written answer given by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry on 30 June 1992 at column *526*.

British Telecom (Shares Sale)

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the names of advisers appointed to advise on the forthcoming sale by the Government of shares in British Telecom, specifying for each adviser the area of work and date of appointment.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the appointments made to date for the forthcoming BT share offer.

BT share offer—advisers appointed

Date of appointment	*Company*	*Role(s)*
30 November 1992	Ernst & Young	Financial consultant
8 December 1992	S. G. Warburg	Financial adviser Global co-ordinator Lead UK broker
15 December 1992	Linklaters & Paines	Legal advisers
15 December 1992	Brunswick Public Relations	PR/Marketing adviser
3 January 1993	Addison Design Company	Design consultants[1]
11 January 1993	Solid Solutions Associates	Financial consultant
25 January 1993	MORI	Market research
24 February 1993	WCRS	Advertising agency

[1] Appointed by Brunswick.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what month of 1993-94 he expects to offer for sale British Telecom shares currently held by the Government.

Mr. Dorrell: No decisions have yet been taken on either the timing of the next sale of shares in BT or the number of shares to be offered for sale.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which investment banks and brokers were invited by the Treasury to tender as advisers in the forthcoming sale by the Government of shares in British Telecom.

Mr. Dorrell: S. G. Warburg has been appointed as financial adviser, global co-ordinator and lead United Kingdom broker for the forthcoming BT share offer. The names of companies invited to tender for an appointment, but not subsequently appointed, are treated as commercially confidential.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what calculations he has made or plans to make to estimate the effect on *(a)* purchases of books and newspapers, *(b)* consumption of food and *(c)* purchase of children's clothes, by families on a regional, socio-economic and income basis of the imposition of VAT at various percentage rates.

Sir John Cope: Work carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies commissioned by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and Her Majesty's Treasury and completed in 1991 suggests an own price elasticity of −0·657 for leisure goods, which include books and newspapers; −0·856 for food; and −0·754 for clothing. These elasticities suggest that applying the standard rate of VAT to goods which are presently zero-rated would reduce the volume of sales by 9·8 per cent., 12·7 per cent. and 11·2 per cent. respectively. We are not aware of any reliable estimates of how these price elasticities vary according to region, socio-economic status or income.

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the recent recommendations of the retail prices index advisory committee.

Mr. Lamont: I have decided to accept all the recommendations made by the committee in its report Cm 2142 on the treatment in the RPI of council tax and holidays as extended by the addendum Cm 2153 on the treatment of transitional relief. The report and the

addendum were presented to the House and published on 21 January and 24 February 1993 respectively. The Central Statistical Office will implement the changes with effect from the RPI for February 1993.

Gross Domestic Product (Cornwall)

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated per capita GDP figure for Cornwall for the latest available year; what is the comparable per capita GDP figure for areas of the United Kingdom which have been granted objective 1 status for EC support; and what is the latest available average per capita GDP figure for the whole European Community.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The European Commission has proposed that Northern Ireland, Merseyside and the Highlands and Islands region of Scotland be granted objective 1 status for the period 1994 to 1999, but the final decision is to be taken by the Council of Ministers in the context of the review of the structural funds regulations. GDP per head figures for Cornwall and the above regions are given below for the year 1989, the latest available on a consistent basis. Also provided is an index comparing these areas with the European Community average for the period 1988-90, on a "purchasing power" basis.

Gross domestic product per head

	£ per head 1989[1]	*PPS/head, EC = 100 1988-89*[2]
Cornwall	5,739	76
Northern Ireland	5,747	76
Merseyside	5,721	79
Highlands and Islands	5,934	79
EC average	n/a	100

Sources:
[1] Central Statistical Office
[2] Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Communities

WALES

Waste Incineration

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many inspections have been undertaken in Wales *(a)* in total and *(b)* to waste incineration plants by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution during each of the last three years.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The inspectorate carried out 338 inspections in 1990-91, 657 in 1991-92 and 588, to date, in 1992-93. Of these, 13, 20 and 15, respectively, were undertaken at waste incineration plants.

Care and Repair Cymru

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the capital allocation for Care and Repair Cymru in each of the last two financial years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Care and Repair home improvement agency initiative provides help and advice on home improvements, maintenance and repairs for elderly and/or disabled owner-occupiers. There is no capital investment programme associated with the initiative.

The Department provides revenue funding to the initiative. Care and Repair Cymru received revenue support of £141,751 in 1990-91 and £111,429 in 1991-92.

Research

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to the Research Council to secure improved representation of academics from Welsh institutions on research students awards committees.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. Each of the research councils has its own mechanism for distributing awards to students. My right hon. Friend has, however, asked the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to establish effective working relations with the Advisory Board for the Research Councils and the individual research councils to ensure that the interests of the higher education sector in Wales are taken fully into account at all stages.

Primary School Classes

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the average class size in primary schools in Wales within each local education authority area during each of the last five years, expressed in average numbers and teacher-pupil ratios.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the average class size and pupil-teacher ratios in primary schools within each local education authority during each of the last five years is given in the following tables:

Table 1: average size of registered classes

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Clwyd	25·5	25·8	25·7	25·0	25·8
Dyfed	21·4	21·8	21·0	21·6	21·7
Gwent	25·7	26·4	26·9	27·1	27·5
Gwynedd	21·1	21·6	22·1	21·8	22·2
Mid Glamorgan	26·0	26·2	26·2	27·2	26·9
Powys	20·2	20·3	20·6	22·1	22·2
South Glamorgan	27·0	26·7	26·4	26·5	26·6
West Glamorgan	24·2	24·8	25·1	25·8	26·0
Wales	24·5	24·8	24·8	25·2	25·4

Table 2: pupil-teacher ratios

	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Clwyd	24·0	24·7	24·6	24·2	24·1
Dyfed	20·8	20·2	19·9	19·9	19·7
Gwent	22·5	22·8	23·1	23·4	23·6
Gwynedd	20·3	20·8	21·0	20·8	21·2
Mid Glamorgan	22·9	23·2	23·4	24·0	23·5
Powys	19·3	19·7	20·0	20·5	20·5
South Glamorgan	22·7	22·7	22·2	21·6	21·8
West Glamorgan	21·3	21·6	21·4	21·5	21·5
Wales	22·1	22·3	22·3	22·3	22·3

Coronary Heart Disease

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the latest estimate of the annual cost of treatment for coronary heart disease in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The requested information is not available centrally.

Public Libraries

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many public libraries have been open and operational in Wales in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The number of public library service points, which include mobile libraries, provision in hospitals and residential houses etc, as well as public library buildings are:

	Number
1979-80	807
1980-81	923
1981-82	966
1982-83	948
1983-84	968
1984-85	1,005
1985-86	978
1986-87	1,156
1987-88	1,218
1988-89	1,242
1989-90	1,267
1990-91	1,318
1991-92	1,386

Source: The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Public Library Statistoics.

I am pleased to note the steady increase in the number of library service points in Wales.

Forestry

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for promoting the future development of forestry in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The forests and woodlands in Wales, and the industries they support, play a valuable role in maintaining rural communities. More than 4,700 people work in the forests, in the downstream industries and in the haulage of timber. Many hundreds more earn a living from associated services and tourism. Forests also make their contribution to a better environment and provide opportunities for countryside leisure and recreation.

I want to ensure that we manage our forests and woodlands well, that we find the most suitable locations to expand the forest area, and that we look at ways of adding value to our home-grown forest products.

I have therefore decided to set up a group of experts to examine these issues and to promote the future development of forestry in Wales. The group will bring together forestry, farming, environmental and development interests, under the chairmanship of the Forestry Commission's chief conservator for Wales. The terms of reference for the group—and a list of its members—have been placed in the Library of the House. The group will begin work shortly and I have asked it to report to me on its conclusions and recommendations by the spring of next year.

Roads

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he intends updating the information given in the 1992 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s."

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have today published the 1993 supplement to "Roads in Wales: Progress and Plans for the 1990s". Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Royal Mail

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Attorney-General what recourse or protection is available against a person who, contrary to the repeatedly expressed wishes of the recipient, persists in sending letters to that recipient through the Royal Mail.

The Solicitor-General: I have no responsibility for the substance of the law relating to the use or abuse of the Royal Mail. An individual experiencing a problem should seek legal advice directed at the circumstances of the particular case.

HEALTH

Organ Donations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many organ donations have been made in *(a)* each regional health authority and *(b)* each district health authority in (i) 1982, (ii) 1987 and (iii) the last 12 month period for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows the numbers of cadaveric solid organ donors in 1982, 1987 and 1992 in

England by regional health authority. Figures for individual district health authorities are not held centrally. The numbers of organs donated are considerably higher as many donors supply more than one organ.

Region	*1982 (kidney donors only)*	*1987*	*1992[1] (provisional)*
Northern	26	40	51
Yorkshire	22	49	58
Trent	43	58	72
East Anglia	22	36	33
North West Thames	29	45	43
North East Thames	36	56	53
South East-West Thames[2]	50	102	100
Wessex	29	42	33
Oxford	26	37	39
South Western	31	46	48
West Midlands	52	64	70
Mersey	25	29	38
North Western	29	41	61
TOTAL	420	645	699

[1] Figures supplied by the United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.
[2] For operational reasons South East Thames and South West Thames are treated as one region.

Community Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will meet representatives of the King's Fund to discuss funding levels for community care.

Mr. Yeo: We have no plans to do so.

Food Safety

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what specific formal training environmental health officers are given in regard to food safety regulations.

Mr. Sackville: The most common route to qualification as an environmental health officer is a four-year honours degree in environmental health which has received accreditation from the Institution of Environmental Health Officers and which includes integrated practical training. The content, interpretation and application of food safety legislation is covered in detail, and a central theme on all courses is risk assessment, so that environmental health officers are able to assess whether action under the Food Safety Act 1990 and associated regulations is necessary to protect public health. In addition the Department of Health runs seminars for environmental health officers on risk assessment and the implementation of European Community legislation.

Abused Children

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will set up a monitoring unit in respect of abused children as advocated by the Warner committee; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: We will be considering this recommendation from the Warner report in the light of the responses to the consultative process which ended on 28 February 1993.

Smoking-related Diseases

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual cost of treating patients suffering from smoking-related diseases and ailments in each year since 1989-90; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is available only for the costs of hospital admissions in 1988-89 and is taken from the Health Education Authority's report, "The Smoking Epidemic". This estimates the annual hospital costs for smoking-related disease in England and Wales to be £351 million (at 1990-91 prices).

Complementary Therapists

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what efforts are being taken by regional health authorities and family health service authorities to encourage awareness among general practitioners and the public of the availability of complementary therapists on the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: None. General practitioners are already aware that, under their terms of service, they are able to employ a wide range of staff, including complementary therapists where necessary, to assist them in the provision of general medical services. The range of services they provide are contained in the information leaflets they are required to make available to their patients. Family health services authorities are also required to make available local directories of the general practitioners in their area and the services they provide.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's latest estimate of the annual numbers of the public paying to see an alternative health practitioner.

Mr. Sackville: No information is held centrally on which to base such an estimate.

Social Workers

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of social workers currently practising are unqualified.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally.

Redbridge Healthcare Trust

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will announce the names of the chairman and non-executive directors of the Redbridge Healthcare Trust, the hours they will be required to work and the salaries they will be paid.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

Chairman: Mr. Mike Smith.

Non-executive directors: Mr. Michael Faraway; Mr. Ismail Simjee; Mrs. Louise Hyams; Mr. Rod Budgett; Mrs. Mary Springham.

Trust chairmen are expected to devote between three and three and a half days a week and non-executive directors between two and three days a month to trust business.

They will receive annual remuneration of £19,285 (chairman) and £5,000 (non-executive directors).

Gene Patents

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the policy of national health service laboratories about entering into agreements to pay fees in respect of gene patents;

(2) what advice she is giving in response to patent claims in relation to biotechnology intellectual property, with particular references to the cystic fibrosis gene;

(3) what is her policy in relation to licence fees for the use of polymerase chain reactions.

Mr. Sackville: The subject of intellectual property rights, including those for polymerase chain reaction and gene sequences, is under review.

Haemoglobin Testing

Ms. Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been undertaken in relation to inner city areas of routine haemoglobin estimation by capillary sampling of children under five years using a haemoglobinometer.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health has not undertaken or funded any such studies. An expert sub-group of the Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy is currently reviewing all aspects of the weaning diet including the incidence and prevention of iron-deficiency anaemia in children in this age group.

The national diet and nutrition survey of pre-school children is at present collecting data on the dietary intakes and nutritional status of children in Great Britain aged 1½-4½ years, including haemoglobin levels.

Secure Units

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how much capital money her Department *(a)* has available and *(b)* has allocated for the provision of secure units for young people in England in 1992-93; and if she will provide a list of the establishments concerned and the sums allocated in each case;

(2) how much capital money her Department *(a)* made available and *(b)* spent on the provision of secure units for young people in England in 1992-93 and each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Yeo: We have made available £2 million in capital money for 1992-93 to fund new provision and upgrading and refurbishment of secure units for young people in England. A further £680,000 is available to meet the capital cost of providing additional secure places for juvenile remands.

The remaining information is shown in the tables.

Secure accommodation capital expenditure
April 1992 to February 1993 (England)

	£
St. John's, Birmingham	295,646
Redsands, Cheshire	7,454
Stoke House, Coventry	164,750
Market Street, Derbyshire	4,831
Sutton Place, Humberside	305,187
Dales, Lancashire	68,202
Fylde, Lancashire	22,762
Briars Hey, Lancashire	17,461
Redbank, Lancashire	48,279
Stamford House, LB Hammersmith	138,209
Total to 28 February 1993	1,072,781

Secure accommodation capital
Budget/expenditure 1982-83 to 1991-92 in thousands

Year	*Budget £000*	*Expenditure £000*
1982-83	750	525
1983-84	600	316
1984-85	1,000	572
1985-86	615	506
1986-87	1,400	503
1987-88	1,200	1,205
1988-89	1,100	1,029
1989-90	1,572	926
1990-91	2,365	2,333
1991-92	2,300	2,153

London Ambulance Board

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the names of the persons who are, or who have been, since 1 January 1991, members of the London ambulance board; who appointed them and on what date; what was the relevant experience of each relating to their membership; what was the terms of office of each member; and to whom the board is completely accountable, other than to herself.

Mr. Sackville: South West Thames regional health authority has made the following appointments for the periods indicated to non-executive positions on the London ambulance service board since it was established in June 1990:

From 8 June 1990 for two years up to 7 June 1992
Mr. Kim Morrell
Mr. Stephen Miles
Mr. Victor Paige
Mr. Roderick Braithwaite
Mrs. Adrienne Fresko (resigned 31 March 1992)

From 8 June 1992 for the period to 31 August 1994
Mrs. Mary Spinks
Mrs. Janet Preston
Mrs. Joanne Cutmore (resigned 23 September 1992)

From 8 June 1992 for the period to 31 August 1996
Mr. Victor Paige
Mr. Roderick Braithwaite

The board is accountable to South West Thames regional health authority as the authority with the responsibility for managing the London ambulance service on behalf of the four Thames regional health authorities.

The relevant background and experience of London ambulance service board members, as a non-statutory body, is a matter for South West Thames regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Professor Marian Hicks, chairman of South West Thames regional health authority, for details.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the date and manner of appointment of Mr. John Wilby as chief executive of the London Ambulance Board, *(b)* the method of advertising used for the post and *(c)* the number and positions of the persons attending the final interviews of the appointing body; and who was responsible for making the appointment.

Mr. Sackville: South West Thames regional health authority appointed Mr. John Wilby as chief executive of the London ambulance service on 1 August 1990 following a recruitment exercise for the post including a national newspaper advertisement, assessment and candidate selection. The final selection panel comprised Baroness Cumberlege, the chairman and Mr. Chris Spry regional general manager of South West Thames regional health authority, Mr. James Harris, then chairman of the London ambulance board, David Rennie, chairman of Harrow DHA and John Smale, personnel director of the brewing division of the Guinness Group.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when and on what authority the board of South West Thames regional health authority appointed the members and chairman, respectively, of the London ambulance board; what responsibilities were given to them; when and where they were published; and what reports of that board have been published in the public minutes of that authority since its creation.

Mr. Sackville: The London ambulance service board is a non-statutory body established in June 1990 by South West Thames regional health authority which has responsibility for managing the London ambulance service on behalf of the four Thames regional health authorities. The responsibilities and reporting procedures of the London ambulance service board are a matter for South West Thames regional health authority. The hon. Member may care to write to Professor Marian Hicks, chairman of South West Thames regional health authority, for further details.

Ambulance Crews (Overtime)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now make it her policy to ensure that all offers of voluntary overtime by ambulance crews that would fill gaps that would otherwise occur in scheduled rostering are not subject to budget restrictions.

Mr. Sackville: All national health service providers, including ambulance services, must provide services within the resources allocated to them. It is for individual ambulance services to manage overtime levels within the overall staffing budgets and to ensure that staff are rostered to provide services to the public.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the increase in prescription charges in each year since 1963; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is in the table. The prescription charge remains substantially less than the average total cost of a prescribed item to the national health service; only one in five prescribed items dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors now attracts a charge, compared with two in five in 1979.

Prescription charge increases 1 January 1963 to 1 April 1993, in cash and real terms

Date	*Prescription charge (£)*	*Cash change (£)*	*Per cent. cash change*	*Per cent. change real terms*
1 January 1963	0·10	—	—	—
1 April 1963	0·10	—	—	—
1 April 1964	0·10	—	—	−4·3
1 March 1965	nil	−0·10	—	—
1 April 1965	nil	—	—	—
1 April 1966	nil	—	—	—
1 April 1967	nil	—	—	—
10 June 1968	0·13	0·13	—	—
1 April 1969	0·13	—	—	−5·0
1 April 1970	0·13	—	—	−7·6
1 April 1971	0·20	0·07	53·8	40·9
1 April 1972	0·20	—	—	−7·5
1 April 1973	0·20	—	—	−6·5
1 April 1974	0·20	—	—	−16·4
1 April 1975	0·20	—	—	−20·3
1 April 1976	0·20	—	—	−11·9
1 April 1977	0·20	—	—	−12·0
1 April 1978	0·20	—	—	−9·8
16 July 1979	0·45	0·25	125·0	92·8
1 April 1980	0·70	0·25	55·6	31·5
1 December 1980	1·00	0·30	42·9	42·9
1 April 1981	1·00	—	—	−8·8
1 April 1982	1·30	0·30	30·0	21·4
1 April 1983	1·40	0·10	7·7	2·9
1 April 1984	1·60	0·20	14·3	8·8
1 April 1985	2·00	0·40	25·0	18·5
1 April 1986	2·20	0·20	10·0	6·6
1 April 1987	2·40	0·20	9·1	3·4
1 April 1988	2·60	0·20	8·3	1·0

Date	Prescription charge (£)	Cash change (£)	Per cent. cash change	Per cent. change real terms
1 April 1989	2·80	0·20	7·7	1·1
1 April 1990	3·05	0·25	8·9	0·9
1 April 1991	3·40	0·35	11·5	4·3
1 April 1992	3·75	0·35	10·3	5·8
1 April 1993	4·25	0·50	13·3	10·3

Health Advisory Service

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what budget was allocated to the health advisory service for the financial year 1991-92 and 1992-93; what was the actual expenditure for 1991-92 and the estimated out-turn for 1992-93.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 23 February 1993]:* The budget allocation for the health advisory service (HAS) in 1991-92 was £432,282, and the expenditure was £398,483; in addition to this the HAS had access to Departmental funds to pay for the secondment of personnel from health authorities and social services departments and £667,104 was spent on this in 1991-92. In 1992-93, the HAS budget included an allocation for secondments, and was set at £997,500; the estimated out-turn is £450,000.

SCOTLAND

Local Government (Staff)

16. **Mr. Oppenheim:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make a statement on the numbers of people employed in local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The number of people employed by Scottish local authorities in September 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, was 305,361.

Quarterly figures for local authority staffing are published jointly by the Scottish Office and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and are available in the Library.

Water Privatisation

17. **Mr. Wray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to come to firm decisions on his plans to privatise or franchise Scottish water.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend will take a decision on the future of water and sewerage services only after all responses to the consultation have been carefully considered. None of the options contained in the consultation paper has been ruled out.

30. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received to the consultation document on water and sewerage sources which were *(a)* opposed to privatisation/franchising and *(b)* in favour of full-scale privatisation/franchising; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: We are still analysing the many responses to the consultation paper and do not therefore have the figures requested by the hon. Member.

Drug Abuse

18. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of drug taking and drug dealing were reported in Scottish secondary schools in *(a)* 1985-86, *(b)* 1987-88, *(c)* 1990-91 and *(d)* 1991-92.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not collected in the form requested. However, the numbers of persons under 17 in Scotland dealt with for drug offences was 157 in 1990 and 226 in 1991. The equivalent figures for the earlier years requested are not readily available, but I shall write to the hon. Member with further information as soon as possible.

The figures I have given do not indicate whether or not the offence occurred on school premises.

River Tay (Flood Control)

20. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about a flood control scheme for the River Tay; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: There have been nine representations about a flood control scheme for the River Tay. Such a scheme would require a full investigation of the Tay catchment area and I am pleased to say that Tayside regional council is considering proposals for a study. We have already indicated to the council that we would be willing in principle to contribute to the study, and details of the council's proposals are awaited.

Local Government

21. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which organisations he consulted with in Scotland while taking stock of measures to improve the future government of Scotland.

Mr. Lang: I and my ministerial colleagues meet a wide range of organisations during the course of our duties and have taken the opportunity of listening to their views on constitutional issues.

Manufacturing Industry

22. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which five manufacturing industries have been the largest foreign earners in Scotland in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stewart: According to the Scottish Council Development and Industry it carries out an annual survey of Scottish manufactured exports and this is the most comprehensive source of information available.

In each of the five years to December 1991, the five leading exporters among Scottish manufacturing industries have been, beginning with the largest: office

machinery, food and drink, chemicals, electronics and mechanical engineering. The order has been unchanged over the five-year period.

Top five Scottish manufacturing export industries in the five years ending 1991

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
1. Office machinery[1]	1,929	2,388	2,573	2,792	2,588
(Per cent.)[2]	30	33	34	33	29
2. Food and drink[1]	1,378	1,485	1,694	1,991	2,129
(Per cent.)[2]	22	21	22	23	24
3. Chemicals[1]	701	686	723	833	1,065
(Per cent.)[2]	11	10	9	10	12
4. Electronics[1]	607	590	684	796	803
(Per cent.)[2]	9	8	9	9	9
5. Mechanical engineering[1]	461	486	536	599	667
(Per cent.)[2]	7	7	7	7	8

[1] (£ million current prices).
[2] Percentage of total manufacturing exports.

Government of Scotland

23. **Mr. Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further stock he has taken on the future government of Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Our review of constitutional arrangements is well advanced and I hope that an announcement about its findings will be made to the House shortly.

Community Care

24. **Mr. Kirkwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will review the formula to be used in April to distribute Department of Social Security resources in the new community care provisions in the Borders region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: My noble and learned Friend the Minister of State made clear when the Department of Social Security transfer was announced in October 1992 that the distribution within Scotland would be reviewed after the first year of operation.

Salmon Farming

25. **Mr. Maclennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the future of the salmon farming industry in Scotland.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend and I receive regular representations about the future of the salmon farming industry, particularly recently concerning proposals to stabilise the salmon market. We recognise the importance of salmon farming for the highlands and islands of Scotland and have welcomed the industry's proposals to establish producer organisations. We have not, however, been able to agree to the proposed compulsory powers for such organisations.

Economy

26. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the STUC to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend last discussed the Scottish economy with the STUC on 14 December 1992.

Youth Training Scheme

27. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many 16 to 18-year-olds in the Glasgow, Govan constituency were unsuccessful in their attempts to find a YTS place during 1992.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available in the form requested.

Legal Aid

28. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what basis he has used for the assessment of civil legal aid expenditure for the financial year 1993-94; and if he will make a statement on proposed changes to eligibility.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend considers the forecasts supplied by the Scottish Legal Aid Board in the context of the public expenditure survey.

I set out the Government's revised proposals on eligibility for legal aid in Scotland in my reply of 17 February to the hon. Member for Ayr at column *226*.

Water and Sewerage Services

29. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what submissions he has received from Scottish local authorities about the future administration of the water and sewerage services.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has received submissions from all the regional and islands councils, and from 42 district councils. These are being considered.

Stranraer-Carlisle (Communications)

31. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further improvements are planned for communications between Stranraer and Carlisle.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The recent network review of trunk roads in Scotland confirmed that the upgrading of the A75 has substantially eliminated the main operating difficulties on the route. However, the Government have plans for further improvements which emphasise safety and overtaking opportunities. I

understand that ScotRail is investigating the possibility of restoring a short section of track at Ayr to allow the Stranraer-Carlisle service to run via Mauchline. This could reduce the present journey time between Stranraer and Carlisle by around 25 minutes.

Broadleaf Trees

32. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the ratio of broadleaf trees to conifers planted and to be planted in *(a)* 1992-93 and *(b)* 1993-94.

Sir Hector Monro: One third of the total area of woodland planted in 1991-92 by the Forestry Commission, and by the private sector with the aid of Forestry Commission grants, was with broadleaved trees. This included the restocking of felled woodland. I expect the ratio of broadleaves to conifers to be similar in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Elderly People (Housing)

33. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what further assessment he has made of the housing requirements of elderly people and people with disabilities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Guidelines on the provision of sheltered housing and housing for the disabled were issued to local authorities on 28 March 1991 in the circular "Housing and Community Care" and set out the recommened level of provision in each case. The authorities were also advised to set targets matching local circumstances and needs over an appropriate timescale.

Forestry

34. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to privatise Forest Enterprise.

Sir Hector Monro: The Government have no such plans.

Financial Services

35. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the financial services industry in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The financial and business services industry makes a substantial contribution to the Scottish economy. In employment terms it has grown by over 80 per cent. since 1979 to its present level of 220,000, representing 11 per cent. of all Scottish employees in employment. Over the past decade the industry's contribution to Scottish gross domestic product has grown from 9½ per cent. to 15 per cent. Funds under management at December 1992 stood at a record £103·4 billion. The industry is well placed to benefit from the opportunities of the single European market and I expect to see continuing strong growth in output in the years ahead.

Exports

36. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the latest Scottish export statistics.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Council Development and Industry published the results of its latest annual survey of Scottish manufacturing exports in November 1992. This is the most comprehensive source of information on Scottish manufactured exports.

In 1991 the value of Scottish manufacturing exports reached its highest ever level of £8·8 billion and this represented a 3 per cent. increase in current value.

Scotland exports more per head of population than the United Kingdom and, in 1991, the value of manufacturing exports for each Scottish worker was £23,000—some 19 per cent. above the United Kingdom figures.

Companies (Irvine)

37. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he has taken against companies in Irvine which have moved on soon after accepting Government grants.

Mr. Stewart: Where companies have received regional selective assistance to assist projects in Irvine and these projects have ceased within the conditions period of the offer of assistance, the action taken has been to pursue recovery of grant paid.

Power Supply

38. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the chairman of Scottish Power to discuss the security of supply.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend meets the chairman of Scottish Power from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Minches (Shipping Safety)

39. **Mr. Macdonald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent representations he has received regarding shipping safety in the Minches.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has recently received a number of representations regarding shipping safety in the Minches. These representations have been concerned primarily with the grounding of the MV Braer in Quendale bay, Shetland, in January. Responsibility for marine safety lies with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet Greater Glasgow health board to discuss the future of the Victoria infirmary.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend regularly meets representatives from all health boards. As regards Greater Glasgow, I am aware that the health board is conducting a review of all its acute and maternity services. The Victoria infirmary features as part of that review and my right hon. Friend looks forward to receiving the health board's recommendations in due course.

Education

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will announce the allocations of further education capital and recurrent grant for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The allocation of capital and recurrent grant to the 43 further education colleges and Orkney and Shetland Islands councils is as follows:

Grant allocations 1993-94

College	*Capital grant*	*Recurrent grant*
Aberdeen College of Further Education	513,193	11,456,100
Angus College of Further Education	38,604	2,504,800
Anniesland College	147,363	3,250,300
Ayr College	43,776	3,998,500
Banff and Buchan College	8,683	2,649,300
Barony College	90,438	1,016,700
Bell College	364,230	4,444,400
Borders College	48,747	3,496,400
Cambuslang College	46,287	3,734,000
Cardonald College	271,187	5,209,200
Central College of Commerce	359,873	3,218,100
Clackmannan College	46,552	2,178,500
Clydebank College	39,886	5,934,400
Coatbridge College	51,410	3,399,300
Cumbernauld College	8,029	2,177,900
Dumfries and Galloway College of Technology	66,967	4,584,800
Dundee College	166,504	10,073,500
Elmwood College	165,147	2,924,700
Falkirk College of Technology	30,226	7,468,700
Fife College of Technology	50,732	6,017,400
Glasgow College of Food Technology	8,680	2,883,400
Glasgow College of Nautical Studies	247,419	3,517,200
Glasgow College of Building and Printing	635,986	4,450,200
Glenrothes College	10,457	4,313,000
Inverness College	343,528	6,038,700
James Watt College	77,200	4,886,500
Jewel and Esk Valley College	417,623	7,107,500
John Wheatley College	73,768	2,625,500
Kilmarnock College	222,743	3,921,000
Langside College	356,916	4,737,900
Lauder College	38,574	4,560,800
Lews Castle College	172,067	1,879,400
Moray College of Further Education	70,295	4,214,700
Motherwell College	317,232	5,955,000
North Glasgow College	279,311	5,526,100
Oatridge College	207,576	1,793,400
Perth College of Further Education	95,565	5,039,600
Reid Kerr College	503,999	6,496,800
Stevenson College	206,626	9,423,200
Stow College	78,982	3,039,600
Telford College	680,966	11,310,000
Thurso College	[1]1,058,877	2,319,500
West Lothian College	41,949	4,739,100
Orkney Islands Council	[2]0	391,000
Shetland Islands Council	[2]0	1,093,900
	8,704,173	[3]202,000,000
Computerised Management Information System (to be allocated)	2,710,000	1,800,000
TOTALS	11,414,173	203,800,000

[1] Includes £0·9 million for ongoing project.
[2] Capital expenditure dealt with through Section 94 allocation to local authority.
[3] An additional £0·8 million will be available to FE Colleges through the Training Credit pilot schemes.

The recurrent grant allocations derive from an analysis of historic budgets. Direct comparison with the position in 1992-93 is not possible because of the changed status of the colleges, their taxation liabilities, variations in income resulting, for example, from changes in higher education tuition fees and the different methods used by each education authority to allocate budgets.

In 1994-95 recurrent expenditure is planned to rise to £215 million and capital expenditure to £12·76 million. It is proposed to introduce a new student based funding methodology from 1994-95.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current target figures for students entering higher education.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 February 1993]:* The Government do not set target figures for students entering higher education. It is for individual institutions to decide the number of students to admit to higher education courses in the light of the demand for those courses and the level of available resources. The expenditure plans set out in Cmd 2214 allow for the proportion of young Scots entering full-time higher education in the United Kingdom to remain roughly constant at its current level of about 34 per cent. for the next three years. Thereafter, the Government expect the proportion to rise to 40 per cent. before the end of the decade.

Student Accommodation

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to compensate the student housing sector if Scottish Homes maintains its decision to withdraw funding for student accommodation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 February 1993]:* No. Scottish Homes has not withdrawn funding for student accommodation. It has issued guidance on the relative priority to be attached to student accommodation projects compared with other housing needs. Scottish Homes has only very occasionally funded student accommodation. The impact of the guidance, in terms of housing for students, will therefore be minimal.

ENVIRONMENT

Country Sports

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the total income, tax revenues and jobs resulting from country sporting activities.

Mr. Maclean: I am aware of the recent report by Cobham Resource Consultants, produced on behalf of the standing conference on countryside sports, entitled "Countryside Sports—Their Economic and Conservation Significance." This report demonstrates the significance of country sports to the rural economy and we have noted its conclusions with interest.

The report estimates that total direct expenditure by organisers of and participants in country sports in Great Britain, amounted to some £1·4 billion in 1991, and provided for direct employment equivalent to 65,000 full-time jobs and indirect employment equivalent to 60,000 full-time jobs.

Clean Technology

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action has been undertaken by his Department to encourage European Community co-operation on the promotion of clean technology following the European Commission report "Industrial Competitiveness and Environmental Protection" of 1986.

Mr. Maclean: The Commission communication, reference number SEC(92)1986, was produced in November last year and discussed under the United Kingdom presidency of the Council of Ministers on 24 November 1992. The Council warmly welcomed the communication and, inter alia, invited the Commission and member states to co-operate to encourage the development and diffusion of cleaner technologies. The Council of Environment Ministers in December welcomed the communication as a step forward in integrating environmental considerations into other policy areas. The Government look forward to further discussions under the Danish presidency.

Oil Spills

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the implications for United Kingdom policy of decisions undertaken at the emergency meeting of the joint European Environment and Transport Council in January to discuss oil spills.

Mr. Maclean: As the answer of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 28 January at column 796 made clear, no decisions were taken at the meeting which require any change in United Kingdom policy.

Departmental Publicity

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the actual expenditure on departmental publicity relating to housing matters in each year since 1979.

Sir George Young: The information in respect of publicity relating to housing matters (excluding staff costs) is as follows:

Year	*Expenditure* £
1987-88	362,252
1988-89	261,764
1989-90	1,540,580
1990-91	1,206,323
1991-92	1,392,074
1992-93	[1]1,399,500

[1] Forecast.

It is not possible to identify related staff costs. Expenditure figures for 1979-80 to 1986-87 are not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress made by the Energy Efficiency Office in testing materials used under the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Maclean: This is a matter for the scheme's administering agency, the Energy Action Grants Agency.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps are currently undertaken by his Department to monitor the standard of installations carried out under the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Maclean: The Energy Action Grants Agency (EAGA) which administers the home energy efficiency scheme employs technical monitoring officers who make physical inspections of a proportion of all work carried out under the scheme.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to review the maximum levels of grant offered for home insulation under the home energy efficiency scheme;

(2) what plans he has to extend the range of improvements which can be grant aided to low-income households under the home energy efficiency scheme;

(3) what plans he has to increase the rate of loft insulation and draughtproofing in low-income households as part of the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Maclean: There will be a small increase in the amount of grant available under the home energy efficiency scheme from some £35 million in the current year to £37·5 million in 1993-94. The scheme is intended to ensure that the greatest number of low income households can benefit from basic energy efficiency measures. I have no current plans to introduce changes to the scheme which would increase the average cost per household and thus reduce the number who could benefit.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is being undertaken by his Department to encourage take-up of energy advice offered under the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Maclean: Neighbourhood energy action is currently undertaking research for the Energy Action Grants Agency on the delivery of energy advice under the scheme.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will establish pilot schemes to test the value of introducing energy efficiency measures for households in addition to those specified under the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Maclean: I have no plans to do so.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to provide funds under the home energy efficiency scheme on the basis of numbers of eligible households within a given area.

Mr. Maclean: No. Eligibility for grant under the scheme depends on the client being in receipt of a qualifying benefit. Allocations of funding to installers must take account of the amount of similar work already carried out in an area and the installer's ability to use the allocation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish energy audits on a sample of households which have been assisted under the home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Maclean: The interim evaluation of the home energy efficiency scheme currently being carried out by the building research energy conservation support unit includes energy audits of a sample of households assisted by the scheme. A copy of the report will be placed in the Library of the House when it is available.

Landfill

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recommendations have been made by the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment on landfill pricing; when their recommendations were made; what action has been taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment recommended in October 1991 that the price of landfill in the United Kingdom should be increased significantly to levels obtaining elsewhere in the EC. In our response in October 1991, we pointed out that the Environmental Protection Act 1990 was already having an upward impact on landfill prices. However, we agreed to re-examine landfill pricing and have undertaken a programme of work since then. On 9 February this year, I announced the publication of a consultants' report for the Department, "Landfill Costs and Prices: Correcting Possible Market Distortions". We have invited comments on the report by 26 March 1993. We will then consider whether to introduce one or more economic instruments for solid waste.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average gate fee for municipal solid waste disposed to landfill in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about gate fees obtaining in other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: The report published by my Department last month, which examines the possibility of a levy on waste going to landfill, indicates that the costs of landfilling municipal solid waste in this country range from £5 to £30 per tonne. Comprehensive information is not held about gate prices for municipal solid waste disposal in other member states of the European Community. Prices in some countries are thought to be below the minimum figure for this country. Prices in those countries which have introduced a tax on waste going to landfill are considerably higher than the maximum for this country.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average gate fee for municipal solid waste disposal to landfill in the United Kingdom; and what assessment he has made as to whether that price fully reflects *(a)* the cost of compliance with the existing pollution control regime, *(b)* the cost of damage to the environment and harm to human health and *(c)* the position of landfill in the waste management hierarchy as the disposal route of last resort.

Mr. Maclean: The prices charged for municipal solid waste disposed to landfill are set by the operators of individual sites. In determining prices, operators will take account of the conditions imposed through the licensing regime which require measures to be taken in order to prevent disposal operations causing pollution or harm to human health.

Waste management in this country takes place within a legislative framework which ensures that each operation is strictly controlled so as to avoid pollution or harm to human health. Within this framework, market forces currently generally determine the disposal option for waste destined for final disposal. In the 1992 Environment White Paper, the Government indicated that they would in future make a presumption in favour of using economic instruments to achieve environmental objectives. As part of our programme of work to explore the use of economic instruments, we have recently published a report which examines the idea of placing a levy on waste going to landfill.

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of municipal solid waste is disposed to landfill in the United Kingdom; and what information he has on practice in other member states of the European Community.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom produces about 20 million tonnes of municipal waste each year of which about 85 to 90 per cent. is currently disposed to landfill. Landfill has historically been the principal waste disposal route for most European countries. Other countries do not benefit from the geology that makes landfill an environmentally sound disposal option in the United Kingdom. Some are now reducing their dependence on landfill although it continues to be a major means of waste disposal for most states. Information produced by the statistical office of the European Communities shows that the proportion of municipal waste disposed to landfill by other member states is as follows:

	Per cent.
Belgium	50
Denmark	53
Germany	66
Greece	98
Spain	77
France	45
Ireland	100
Italy	31
Luxembourg	30
Netherlands	55
Portugal	28

EC Habitats Directive

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes to implement the EC habitats directive by primary legislation.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are assessing what is necessary to implement the directive. Our proposals will be issued in due course.

Wildlife Sites

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cases of damage to wildlife sites from destruction or damage by developers subsequent to refusal of planning permission on nature conservation grounds have been brought to his attention in the years from 1989 to 1992.

Mr. Maclean: I regret the information is not available in the form requested. Over the last two years about 24 cases have been drawn to the attention of the Department.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received on the need for new powers to control wilful damage to wildlife sites of the kind occurring at Royate hill, Bristol.

Mr. Maclean: In the last 12 months 50 to 60 letters in support of proposals for some form of additional protection for sites of local wildlife importance have been received by the Department. The majority of these followed the unfortunate incident at Royate hill.

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers are available to local authorities to prevent damage to wildlife sites from destruction or damage by developers subsequent to the refusal of planning permission on nature conservation grounds.

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities may use their powers to enter into management agreements with landowners, to declare local nature reserves and make byelaws to protect them. They may make tree preservation orders and article 4 directions to remove permitted development rights. They have a number of powers to acquire land by agreement or, where authorised, compulsorily but it is for the local authority to decide which power or powers are appropriate. Wild birds and certain species of animal and plant are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 or under specific legislation and local authorities and others have the power to prosecute offenders.

Nature Conservation Orders

Ms. Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with local authorities on the need for nature conservation orders.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Local Government Commission to issue notes of guidance on local government reorganisation for Avon, Humberside, Cleveland and Gloucestershire.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Local Government Commission is due to publish its draft recommendations for local government structure in Cleveland and Durham by 9 May. Draft recommendations for Avon, Gloucestershire and Somerset and for Humberside, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire are due to be published by 13 and 20 June respectively.

Illegal Camping

Mr. Rathbone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress on consultation on the law relating to illegal camping.

Mr. Baldry: I am considering carefully over 1,200 responses to this Department's consultation paper "Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968". I have placed a list of the responses in the House of Commons Library, and copies of the responses are in the Department's library. An announcement about the way forward will be made as soon as practicable.

Eco-labelling

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent to which the eco-labelling regulation has been followed by the United Kingdom Eco-labelling Board in its development of criteria for eco-labels; and if he will set out the consultations the board has had with interest groups and the assessment it has made of the full life cycle ecological impact of products.

Mr. Maclean: I have no reason to believe that the United Kingdom Eco-labelling Board has not followed the requirements of the EC regulations in its development of criteria for eco-labels.

As the board has responsibility for operational aspects of the scheme I have asked it to write to my hon. Friend setting out the consultations it has carried out with interest groups with information on the assessments they have made of the full life cycle ecological impacts of the product groups.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to subject the eco-labelling scheme to a full cost-benefit analysis to establish if the environmental improvements achieved are consistent with the time and money being invested.

Mr. Maclean: We shall evaluate the effectiveness of the policy as we do with all new policy initiatives to ensure that it meets the objectives set and provides value for money.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what reasons underlie the targeting by the United Kingdom Eco-labelling Board of hairsprays, deodorants, and hair styling aids for eco-labels; what plans he has to include furnishings, textiles, hi-fi equipment and other products with known environmental impacts; and if he will make a statement on how product categories for new eco-labels will be selected in future;

(2) what progress is being made with the European eco-labelling scheme; and which product categories he expects to be finalised for launch in June.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom Eco-labelling Board has been established to administer and promote the European Community eco-labelling scheme nationally and has responsibility for dealing with the operational aspects of the scheme. I have therefore asked the board to reply to my hon. Friend direct.

Council Houses

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for each local authority *(a)* the amount spent on council house repairs and maintenance, *(b)* the number of council-owned properties and *(c)* the average spent on repairs and maintenance per council-owned property, for 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Sir George Young: I have deposited a copy of tables showing the information requested by the hon. Member in the Library of the House. The amounts shown in the tables relate to revenue expenditure on repairs and maintenance and do not include expenditure on major repairs charged to capital.

Norbreck Parade, London

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to call in the report of the inspector in relation to the appeal held on 3 and 11 February at Ealing town hall in relation to the creation of an access from the north circular road to Norbreck parade, London NW10.

Mr. Baldry: The appeal has been recovered for the Secretary of State's decision.

Local Government Employees

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were employed full time and part time in local government in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information is given in the table for each authority in Cambridgeshire. Totals have not been given because data for some authorities are not available centrally.

Numbers employed in local authorities in Cambridgeshire
At June of each year

Authority	1984		1985		1986		1987		1988		1989		1990		1991		1992	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Cambridgeshire county	12,261	8,349	12,355	8,617	12,613	10,135	12,979	10,914	13,088	11,022	13,179	11,059	13,397	11,374	13,403	11,712	13,380	12,369
Cambridge	911	109	942	121	933	143	1,005	156	1,051	160	1,112	152	1,242	177	1,084	237	950	231
East Cambridgeshire	234	31	211	29	210	22	210	20	213	20	219	19	285	26	206	26	N/a	N/a
Fenland	367	74	365	83	362	99	368	92	383	90	392	82	406	123	413	145	392	140
Huntingdon	567	162	563	158	535	176	559	159	570	157	549	163	680	164	609	200	580	233
Peterborough	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	1,236	127	N/a	N/a
South Cambridgeshire	372	30	335	31	370	36	379	40	358	40	352	43	354	46	326	45	317	51

N/a—Data not available.
Source: Joint Staffing Watch for England.
Note: Education, highways, fire services, police and social services are administered by Cambridgeshire county council. The other authorities shown are district councils which, amongst other services, administer housing, planning and refuse collection.

Inland Bathing Waters

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many inland bathing waters as required by article 1 of the EC water quality directive 76/160 he has designated.

Mr. Maclean: So far, no inland waters have been identified as within the scope of the bathing water directive.

Norfolk Beaches

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will require the National Rivers Authority to reinstate the programme of tests for enteroviruses on all Norfolk beaches in the current year.

Mr. Maclean: No. It is not a requirement of the bathing water directive to test for enteroviruses at all bathing waters.

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment for what reasons the National Rivers Authority discontinued testing for enteroviruses on all but two Norfolk beaches in 1992.

Mr. Maclean: In accordance with the requirements of the bathing water directive, bathing waters which failed the directive's coliform standards in 1991 were sampled by the National Rivers Authority for enteroviruses in 1992. Only two Norfolk bathing waters failed the coliform standards in 1991.

EC Structural Funds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking to ensure that the United Kingdom complies with the additionality criteria for European Community structrual funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department is responsible for providing public expenditure cover for forecast ERDF receipts for local authority other services block schemes, for those non-departmental public bodies, agencies and charities which fall within my Department's ambit, and for privatised water companies. Provision for some £176 million has been made for 1993-94 as shown in the Department's annual report, which was laid in the House of Common's Library on 10 February 1993.

Revenue Support Grant

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of revenue support grant per inhabitant for *(a)* Ashfield, *(b)* Bassetlaw, *(c)* Broxtowe, *(d)* Gedling, *(e)* Mansfield, *(f)* Newark and Sherwood, *(g)* Nottingham, *(h)* Rushcliffe, *(i)* Westminster, *(j)* Wandsworth and *(k)* the City of London for 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The level of revenue support grant per head of resident population for the authorities requested is given in the table:

Local authority	*Revenue Support Grant per head 1992-93* £	*Revenue Support Grant per head 1993-94* £
Ashfield	267·19	16·98
Bassetlaw	285·41	31·14
Broxtowe	264·73	15·45
Gedling	275·29	19·92
Mansfield	279·49	26·67
Newark and Sherwood	286·69	37·40
Nottingham	329·40	83·43
Rushcliffe	257·90	12·22
Westminster	958·85	802·79
Wandsworth	714·59	619·18
City of London	10,771·14	11,225·31

The figures for the two years are not comparable since revenue support grant for the year 1993-94 is to be paid direct to each billing and major precepting authority,

whereas in 1992-93 it was paid into the collection fund administered by the charging authority on behalf of all tiers of authority in the area.

Shudehill Developments Ltd.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from the chairman of Shudehill Developments Ltd. in regard to the proposed retail development at Dumplington in Greater Manchester; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State received a letter from Mr. Melmoth only last week. Mr. Melmoth argues that the results of a study commissioned by his company show that, should the Dumplington shopping centre be allowed to proceed, the future of Manchester city centre as a regional shopping venue would be under very serious threat and the shopping development which his company proposes to develop at Shudehill might no longer be viable.

Mr. Melmoth's letter is being considered alongside the other representations we have received about Dumplington, about which we expect to make an announcement very shortly.

London Boroughs (Debt)

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assistance he proposes to make available to London boroughs and the Common Council during 1993-94 in respect of the extra costs due to his decisions on housing revenue account subsidy in respect of debt from the former Greater London Council; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood *[pursuant to his reply, 17 February 1993, c. 283-84]:* My right hon. and learned Friend is currently contemplating the recovery of the amounts of housing subsidy paid in connection with deemed debt prior to 1 April 1990. Were he to recover such subsidy in any case, he intends to issue capitalisation directions and supplementary credit approvals (SCAs) to assist the authorities concerned.

DEFENCE

C-130J Aircraft

Mr. Jopling: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his estimate of the percentage British input to the proposed C-130J aircraft to replace the Hercules fleet.

Mr. Aitken: The C-130J is one of the options being considered as a replacement for the existing RAF Hercules fleet. It is a new development of the Hercules aircraft being designed by Lockheed as a private venture. Several British companies are bidding as sub-contractors and I was pleased to hear recently that Dowty would be providing the propellers. However, this is a matter for Lockheed. The percentage of United Kingdom work content is one of the factors to be taken into account when bids are eventually sought.

Civil Airline Research

Mr. Adley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what contributions have been made in the last five years from his departmental budget towards research and development costs of civil airlines.

Mr. Aitken: My Department makes no contributions towards the R and D costs of civil airlines. However, the Defence Research Agency undertakes a number of generic research programmes, jointly funded by the MOD and the DTI, of relevance to civil as well as military aircraft applications; these have a current value of £40 million, of which the MOD will contribute £27 million.

Electronic Supplies Ltd.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received about the dispute between his Department and JNES engineering company; whether he will investigate difficulties met by other engineering companies in fulfilling orders for identical components; what assessment he has made of the extent to which problems are attributable to the designs provided by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has received a number of representations on this subject. The issues involved have been fully investigated and were considered and settled at an arbitration hearing in 1990.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

French Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations he has made to *(a)* the French Government and (b) the European Commission about the legality, and effects on competition, of the £33·8 million of aid provided to the French fishing industry and its effects on fair competition;

(2) what proposals he has to consult the fishing industry with a view to providing support to it equivalent to the subsidised loans and emergency aid made available to the French industry by the French Government;

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect of the emergency aid given to the French fishing industry on the extent of French fishing within British waters as designated under the Fishing Limits Act 1976.

Mr. Curry: I have asked the French Government to supply information about the reported aid package for fishermen, in the course of pressing them for action in relation to the recent intolerable attacks on United Kingdom fish exports. We have also pressed the Commission to seek detailed information on this aid, so that it can discharge its responsibility to conclude whether it is compatible with the provisions of the treaty. I have no plans to consult the industry about the provision of similar aid in United Kingdom.

In the absence so far of fuller details, it is not possible fully to assess the effect of the aid. However, the vast bulk of the aid does not appear to take the form of grant but of loans to assist with the servicing of existing loans. The rights of French vessels to fish in United Kingdom waters are unaffected by the aid package, as they are strictly controlled by annual quota allocations and the rules of the common fisheries policy.

Correspondence

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what the guidelines are for the average time it should take his Department to answer hon. Members' correspondence; what the average time has been, in each month, for the last year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: This Department's target is for Ministers to reply within 21 days of receipt to letters from hon. Members and noble Lords. The percentage of letters replied to within this deadline in each month of 1992 is as follows:

	Per cent.
January	70
February	81
March	89
April	93
May	93
June	89
July	89
August	71
September	74
October	84
November	78
December	60

We do not hold information on the average time taken to reply to Ministers' correspondence.

Vegetables

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures his Department is taking to encourage the retention of less common varieties on the national approved list for vegetables.

Mr. Curry: The Department has, in conjunction with the French authorities, put forward a proposal to the EC Commission's standing committee on seeds and propagating material for agriculture, horticulture and forestry which would have the effect of relaxing current controls over the sale to the amateur gardener of small packets of seeds of traditional vegetable varieties. This proposal is currently under consideration by the standing committee.

Agriculture Council

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague), of 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *91-92*, what were the voting figures recorded in the meeting of the Agriculture Council held between 9 and 13 February.

Mr. Curry: At the meeting of the Agriculture Council in question a vote was taken on the proposed arrangements for bananas in the single market. Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands voted against the proposal; all other member states voted in favour.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Railways

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 18 February to the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), *Official Report*, column *19*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the consultants' report on the scope for introducing a private element into the management and operation of Northern Ireland Railways.

Mr. Atkins: No. Separately from this report, the Northern Ireland Transport Holding Company has recently submitted the findings of a study it had commissioned into the delivery of public transport services in Northern Ireland. It may take some time to reach firm conclusions and it would be premature, therefore, to place a copy in the Library.

Fair Employment Commission

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many firms were registered with the Fair Employment Commission on 6 February 1990; and how many of these firms had supplied their review of employment practices by 6 February 1993.

Mr. Atkins: On 6 February 1990 the Commission registered 1,569 private concerns. While every registered concern is required to conduct a review of its employment composition and practices at least once every three years, there is no statutory requirement to supply a copy of its review report to the commission.

Murders

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table of *(a)* the number of murders committed, *(b)* the number of persons charged with murder and *(c)* the number of persons convicted of murder in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years and the current year; and for each of those years how many of the persons (i) charged and (ii) convicted actually operated the means of committing the murder.

Mr. Mates: The available information is as follows:

	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*[1]1993*
Number of murders committed	111	67	71	114	108	11
Number of persons charged with murder[2]	23	31	18	38	38	n/a
Number of persons convicted of murder	27	15	22	27	26	3

[1] Up to 31 January 1993.

[2] The figures provided in the above table relate to all murders. However statistics on the number of persons charged with murder are available only in respect of scheduled offences of murder.

Information in respect of (i) and (ii) as to the extent of each individual's involvement in the murder is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Non-domestic Property Rates

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will introduce legislation to reform the rating of non-domestic property in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will introduce a general revaluation on non-domestic property in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what plans he has to review the valuation of non-domestic property for rating purposes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: There are no present plans to change or replace the existing arrangements for the rating of the non-domestic sector in Northern Ireland. The case for a revaluation is kept under review and any plans would, as in the past, be announced well in advance.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many appeals against the rateable value of *(a)* non-domestic property as a whole and *(b)* licensed premises have been heard in each year since 1976.

Mr. Mates: Information is available only from 1986-87 and then only in respect of the total number of all appeals, including domestic, decided by the Commissioner of Valuation. It is only possible to distinguish non-domestic property and licensed premises appeals from 1991-92 onwards.

The total number of all appeals decided by the Commissioner in each year was as follows:

Year	*Number*
1986-87	959
1987-88	1,005
1988-89	1,140
1989-90	1,105
1990-91	874
1991-92	702
[1]1992-93	539

[1]January 1993.

The figure for 1991-92 includes approximately 386 non-domestic appeals of which eight related to licensed premises and that for 1992-93 includes approximately 302 non-domestic appeals of which 14 related to licensed premises.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received about the valuation of non-domestic property in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates: The more recent representations made about the valuation of non-domestic property in Northern Ireland have mainly concerned individual properties and circumstances affecting the quantum of assessment and distinguishment of the valuation for either derating or exemption from rates.

A number of representations with more general application have been made by district councils about the valuation of municipal leisure centres and residential and nursing homes. Representations have also been made on behalf of the retail licensed trade about problems associated with the method of valuation of licensed premises.

Manse Road, Castlereagh

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints he has received about conditions on the surface of Manse road, Fourwinds, Castlereagh; what is the source of mud at this location; and what action he has taken to improve conditions on this stretch of roadway.

Mr. Atkins: No complaints have been received in the past 18 months. While mud may occasionally be deposited on this particular stretch of road from traffic accessing an adjacent housing development, the developer is aware of the need to keep the road clean.

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the payments of compensation for miscarriages of justice made in Northern Ireland under section 133 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 or ex gratia from public funds indicating, in each case, the period of imprisonment in respect of which the payment was made.

Mr. Mates: Since section 133 came into operation, the right to compensation under that provision has been acknowledged in three cases. In none has the full amount yet been assessed, although interim payments on account —not specifically related to the period of imprisonment —have been made. No ex-gratia payments of this nature have been made from public funds over the period.

Life Sentences

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what grounds a life sentence prisoner may be released prior to the standard 10-year review.

Mr. Mates: A life sentence prisoner may be released at any time at the discretion of the Secretary of State. In practice release before 10 years in custody may take place only where exceptional circumstances exist relating to the crime itself and the offender's role in it; on medical grounds; or where the prisoner has given significant assistance to the authorities which has put his/her life in danger.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of any life sentence prisoners released in the past six years prior to the standard 10-year review, the dates of such releases, the grounds for each release and the respective times served.

Mr. Mates: Seven such prisoners have been released on licence during this period: one in 1988 after six years; one in 1990 after eight years; four in 1991 after six, seven, eight and nine years respectively; and one this year after seven years. Those released had served an appropriate time to mark their offences. With the exception of those released after eight years in 1990 and nine years in 1991, the period served for retribution took into account significant assistance to the authorities. It would not be appropriate to give the names of the individuals concerned.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements exist to grant early release to life sentence prisoners in exchange for information and to assist such persons with relocation; and whether final decisions on such matters are taken at ministerial level.

Mr. Mates: A reduction in the retributive period may be given to those serving life sentences in exchange for information, based on the quality and quantity of the information provided; its accuracy; the willingness of the informant to confront those apprehended on the strength of his/her evidence; and the degree to which the informant and his/her family are put at risk of reprisal. All such decisions are taken by Ministers. Such individuals are released into the protection of the police.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the respective criteria for life sentence reviews applied by the Life Sentence Review Board, judges and the Secretary of State or Minister.

Mr. Mates: Life sentence cases are reviewed in order to assess whether a sufficient period has been served to mark the gravity of the offence and whether the risk of reoffending is remote. These criteria are applied by the board, the judiciary and Ministers.

Breath Tests

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many breath tests were carried out over the Christmas and new year period 1992-93 in Northern Ireland; how many of these proved positive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* During the period 19 December 1992 to 1 January 1993 a total of 156 persons were breath tested; 29 of these (18·6 per cent.) were found to be over the legal limit.

The percentage of tests which proved positive has fallen slightly since last year and maintains the downward trend of the last few years. However, it is still unacceptably high.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prostitution

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the *(a)* men and *(b)* women, convicted of living on the earnings of prostitution or exercising control over a prostitute, have been sent to prison in each year since 1989; and what was the period of imprisonment imposed in each case.

Mr. Jack: Information for the Metropolitan police district, including the City of London, and England and Wales is given in the table.

Number of persons convicted and sentenced to immediate custody for certain offences in the Metropolitan police district (including City of London) and England and Wales, by sex and length of sentence 1989, 1990 and 1991

Area/offence		Year		Total found guilty	Immediate custody	Length of sentence: 4 months and under	Over 4 months, up to 6 months	Over 6 months, up to 1 year	Over 1 year, up to 18 months	Over 18 months, up to 2 years	Over 2 years, up to 3 years	Over 3 years, up to 4 years	Over 4 years, up to 5 years
METROPOLITAN POLICE DISTRICT[1]													
Living on earnings of prostitution or exercising control over prostitute	*Sexual Offences Act 1956, Sections 30 and 31*	1989	M	30	16	2	4	1	5	3	—	—	1
			F	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
		1990	M	20	8	—	1	4	—	—	3	—	—
			F	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
		1991	M	22	11	3	1	4	—	1	1	1	—
			F	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Living wholly or in part on the earnings of male prostitution	*Sexual Offences Act 1967, Section 5(1)*	1989	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			F	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
		1990	M	2	2	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
			F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
		1991	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Area/offence		Year		Total found guilty	Immediate custody	Length of sentence: 4 months and under	Over 4 months, up to 6 months	Over 6 months, up to 1 year	Over 1 year, up to 18 months	Over 18 months, up to 2 years	Over 2 years, up to 3 years	Over 3 years, up to 4 years	Over 4 years, up to 5 years
ENGLAND AND WALES													
Living on earnings of prostitution or exercising control over prostitute	*Sexual Offences Act 1956, Sections 30 and 31*	1989	M	101	58	7	13	10	14	5	6	—	3
			F	17	5	3	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
		1990	M	62	22	5	2	7	3	1	4	—	—
			F	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
		1991	M	68	30	7	1	10	4	2	4	1	1
			F	11	2	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—
Living wholly or in part on the earnings of male prostitution	*Sexual Offences Act 1967, Section 5(1)*	1989	M	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			F	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
		1990	M	2	2	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—
			F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
		1991	M	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
			F	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

[1] Including City of London.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the current system of inspection in identifying breaches of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied that the inspection system is adequate to check and monitor the current work of licence holders and conditions in designated establishments.

Police (Encrypted Radios)

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 February, *Official Report*, column *144*, how many police forces currently use encrypted radios; and what assistance his Department gives to police forces in obtaining such equipment.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Thirty-eight police forces in England and Wales have digitally encrypted radios for use on specialist operations. In addition, 19 police forces have purchased an analogue speech privacy device which gives a lower level of security than digitally encrypted radios but can operate with existing radio equipment. The Home Office has provided financial and engineering support for the development and trial of this new equipment and has negotiated favourable purchasing arrangements with suppliers on behalf of the police service.

Breath Tests

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were breath tested by the police in each region during the 1991-92 and 1992-93 drink-drive campaigns; and how many tests were positive.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Association of Chief Police Officers has collected figures for the number of screening breath tests required and the number of positive results in each police force area between 19 December 1991 and 1 January 1992 and between 19 December 1992 and 1 January 1993. These are given in the following table:

Screening breath test required and the number of positive results—England and Wales

Police force area	19 December 1991-1 January 1992: Number of breath tests	19 December 1991-1 January 1992: Number with positive outcome	19 December 1992-1 January 1993: Number of breath tests	19 December 1992-1 January 1993: Number with positive outcome
Avon and Somerset	1,173	107	514	85
Bedfordshire	479	60	702	59
Cambridgeshire	936	38	1,558	39
Cheshire	903	97	826	78
Cleveland	898	87	621	52
Cumbria	689	61	757	33
Derbyshire	674	49	807	61
Devon and Cornwall	1,244	114	1,263	119
Dorset	422	42	626	62
Durham	710	77	1,015	67
Essex	2,129	124	2,754	105
Gloucestershire	493	46	408	25
Greater Manchester	4,711	350	5,126	297
Hampshire	1,958	149	1,982	134
Hertfordshire	606	62	428	49
Humberside	984	91	525	65
Kent	2,175	120	2,029	109
Lancashire	1,347	146	1,423	127
Leicestershire	1,216	96	1,086	54
Lincolnshire	1,063	33	941	49

Police force area	19 December 1991-1 January 1992 Number of breath tests	Number with positive outcome	19 December 1992-1 January 1993 Number of breath tests	Number with positive outcome
London, City of	111	10	86	9
Merseyside	1,151	145	566	130
Metropolitan Police District	12,347	835	12,379	804
Norfolk	3,486	59	917	35
Northamptonshire	778	35	728	33
Northumbria	533	122	383	118
North Yorkshire	1,175	69	665	38
Nottinghamshire	609	79	342	80
South Yorkshire	1,098	150	831	95
Staffordshire	932	82	505	69
Suffolk	896	50	638	68
Surrey	1,721	83	1,188	43
Sussex	806	102	741	71
Thames Valley	2,855	154	3,856	131
Warwickshire	188	33	205	24
West Mercia	939	99	1,184	98
West Midlands	1,344	251	1,160	205
West Yorkshire	1,886	240	1,638	188
Wiltshire	1,034	51	919	40
Dyfed-Powys	711	54	776	41
Gwent	849	47	734	34
North Wales	1,824	76	1,284	76
South Wales	2,035	146	1,953	149
England and Wales	64,118	4,921	59,069	4,248

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will issue a consultation document on private wheel clamping.

Mr. Jack: A consultation paper on wheel clamping on private land in England and Wales was published on 23 February 1993.

Copies of the paper have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. They have also been sent direct to all hon. Members, to individuals and groups that have already expressed an interest and to others with an identifiable interest in any of the options discussed in the paper. Copies of the document may also be obtained free of charge by writing to C4 Division, Home Office, Room 339, 50 Queen Anne's gate, London SW1H 9AT.

The document requests that observations of both fact and opinion should reach the Home Office no later than the end of May.

Race Relations

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations the Minister of State has received from the chief executive of Manchester city council about the proposed reduction in grant paid under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966; what reply he is sending; what action he will be taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have received a letter dated 10 February. In my reply, dated 26 February, I reaffirmed that the Government remain firmly committed to the reduction of racial disadvantage; that section 11 grant continues to play an important role in our programme; that we regret that, due to the general economic circumstances, it is not possible to sustain throughout the next three years the level of expenditure that had earlier been planned; and that we are anxious to work closely with local authorities and others to ensure that members of ethnic minorities derive maximum benefit from the substantial amount of funding which is available.

Mrs. Khanum Jan

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a decision is to be taken on the application by Mrs. Khanum Jan (Ref.: J244929) to be granted indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The immigration department wrote to the hon. Member on 9 February confirming that the application had been granted and seeking assistance in contacting Mrs. Jan. Three attempts to post her passport to her had proved unsuccessful, apparently because she had changed address. We were finally told the new address on 25 February and returned the documents the same day.

Offenders (Staffordshire)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of offenders in Staffordshire were *(a)* under 18, *(b)* under 21 and *(c)* under 25 years in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Information for 1991 on the number and percentage of known offenders by age group is given in the table.

Number and percentage of offenders cautioned and found guilty at all courts in Staffordshire police force area and England and Wales by age and type of offence
1991

	Staffordshire police force area						England and Wales					
	Indictable offences		Summary non-motoring offences		All offences (excluding summary motoring)		Indictable offences		Summary non-motoring offences		All offences (excluding summary motoring)	
Age/disposal	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Aged 10 and under 18												
Cautioned	2,078	57	539	48	2,617	55	95,533	53	27,076	27	122,609	44
Found guilty	881	13	349	4	1,230	8	42,019	13	17,918	4	59,937	8
Total found guilty and cautioned	2,959	28	888	9	3,847	19	137,552	27	44,994	8	182,546	17
Aged 18 and under 21												
Cautioned	391	11	146	13	537	11	23,891	13	11,573	12	35,464	13
Found guilty	1,571	23	1,062	12	2,633	16	73,357	22	45,361	10	118,718	15
Total found guilty and cautioned	1,962	19	1,208	12	3,170	15	97,248	19	56,934	10	154,182	14
Aged 21 and under 25												
Cautioned	241	7	89	8	330	7	16,790	9	11,060	11	27,850	10
Found guilty	1,465	22	1,520	16	2,985	19	70,402	21	39,223	9	109,625	14
Total found guilty and cautioned	1,706	16	1,609	16	3,315	16	87,192	17	50,283	9	137,475	13
All ages												
Cautioned	3,676	100	1,120	100	4,796	100	179,885	100	98,880	100	278,765	100
Found guilty	6,740	100	9,225	100	15,965	100	335,394	100	450,558	100	785,952	100
Total found guilty and cautioned	10,416	100	10,345	100	20,761	100	515,279	100	549,438	100	1,064,717	100

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what instructions have been issued to benefits agencies in the past year about refusing income support under the deprivation of capital regulations to those paying off part or all of their mortgages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Harry Barnes, dated 2 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what instructions have been issued to benefits agencies in the past year about refusing Income Support under the deprivation of capital regulations to those paying off part of or all of their mortgages; and if he will make a statement.

It may help if I explain that claims to Income Support are decided in the first instance by adjudication officers. If a customer is dissatisfied, they may appeal against the decision to a Social Security Appeal Tribunal. Further appeal may also be made to a Social Security Commissioner. These authorities carry out their functions independently, consequently, no Government Minister or Departmental official is able to comment on the decisions they make or intervene in matters for which they are responsible.

Guidance on the treatment of capital and deprivation of capital is provided in the Adjudication Officers Guide. I can confirm that staff in the Benefits Agency offices have been reminded of the provisions of existing legislation and guidance available to them regarding deprivation of capital.

These reminders were issued in the form of circulars from the Benefits Agency Central Services and Central Adjudication Services. There has been no change in the treatment of capital or deprivation of capital, in Income Support Law, in the past year.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Michael Bellinger

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to make a decision on the application by Mr. Michael Bellinger (NI No. YB 99 28 98 A) of 2 Holman way, Ivybridge, for industrial injury benefit; and why there has been a delay in his appeal.

Mr. Scott: The administration of industrial injuries disablement benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to my hon. Friend and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 2 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking when he expects to make a decision on the application by Mr. Michael Bellinger (NI No. YB 99 28 92 A) of 2 Holman Way, Ivybridge, for industrial injury benefit; and why there has been a delay in his appeal.

I am pleased to tell you that Mr. Bellinger's appeal has already been listed and is due to be heard by the Medical Appeal Tribunal later this month. The Independent Tribunal Service telephoned Mr. Bellinger on 25 February to arrange a date for his appeal hearing. Mr. Bellinger's wife took the call and agreed the date with ITS. I would like to point out that Adjudication Officers and the Independent Tribunal Service carry out their duties independently of the Department and consequently neither Government Ministers nor the Department can intervene in matters for which they are responsible.

There does not appear to have been any undue delay on the part of the Benefit's Agency in dealing with Mr. Bellinger's appeal. I have written to you separately and in greater detail about this matter.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will also appear in the Library.

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill [Lords].

Mr. Scott: We share the Bill's aim of eliminating discrimination against disabled people but we believe this Bill will result in extensive litigation and additional costs for business and taxpayers. The aim is best achieved by programmes of education, persuasion and practical help, backed up, where necessary, by targeted legislation.

Benefits

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate the number of taxpayers who receive *(a)* family credit, *(b)* housing benefit, *(c)* community charge benefit, *(d)* all three benefits and *(e)* at least one of those three benefits.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* The information is not available in the precise form requested. Couples who claim family credit, housing benefit and community charge benefit are treated as a single unit. Therefore, the numbers given are in terms of taxpaying households rather than individual taxpayers.

Number of households in receipt of benefit	*000's*
Family Credit	221
Housing Benefit	277
Community Charge Benefit	471
All three benefits	19
At least one of the benefits	704

Notes:
1. Figures in the table show the position at May 1990, the latest available date for all benefits.
2. As at July 1992 the number of taxpaying households receiving Family Credit was 282,000.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Royal Prerogative

Mr. Garrett: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the orders made through the Privy Council under the royal prerogative in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Newton: The information is supplied in the following tables:

1991

The Civil Service Order in Council 1991.

The Diplomatic Service Order 1991.

Order amending the Charter of the Royal British Legion.

Order amending the Charter of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.

Order appointing Governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition to the Visitor of the University of London.

Order amending the Charter of the British Film Institute.

Order amending the Charter of the Chartered Insurance Institute.

Order re-appointing Governors of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Order re-appointing the Visitor of Brunei University.

Order appointing a Lord Northcliffe Professor of Modern English Literature at University College, London.

Three Orders approving drafts of Hong Kong Letters Patent and Instructions to the Governor.

Order approving the grant of a Charter to Henley Management College.

Order approving the grant of a Supplemental Charter to the Scout Association.

Order appointing a Visitor of the School of Oriental and African Studies.

Order re-appointing members of the Court of the University of Leeds.

Order approving a report of a Committee on a Petition to the Visitor of the University of London.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Institute of Purchasing and Supply seeking a Charter of Incorporation.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Royal Charter of Surgeons of England seeking a Supplemental Charter and the grant of a Charter of Incorporation to the College of Anaesthetists.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the King's School Canterbury praying for the grant of a Supplemental Charter.

Order directing the Lord Chancellor to cause the Great Seal to be affixed to a Proclamation relating to bank holidays.

Order approving the grant of a Supplemental Charter to Cheltenham Ladies College.

Order approving the grant of a Supplemental Charter to the Chartered Institution of Bankers in Scotland.

Order amending the Charter of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators.

Order amending the Charter of the Institute of Actuaries.

Order amending the Statutes of the Grand Priory of the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem in England.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Animal Health Trust seeking the grant of a Supplemental Charter.

Order approving the grant of a Supplemental Charter to the Chartered Institute of Patent Agents.

Order amending the Charter of the Royal Archaeological Institute.

Order amending the Charter of the University of Leeds.

Order appointing a Visitor of King's College, London.

Order appointing members of the governing body of the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine.

Order proroguing Parliament.

Order approving a Supplemental Charter for the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Order approving a Supplemental Charter for the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Scotland.

Order amending the Charter of the Institute of Metals.

Order amending the Charter of the Chartered Insurance Institute.

Order amending the Charter of the Royal Agricultural Society of England.

Order amending the Charter of the University of Birmingham.

Order amending the Charter of the University of Essex.

The Civil Service Commission Order 1991.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Institute of Taxation seeking a Charter of Incorporation.

Order directing the Lord Chancellor to cause the Great Seal to be affixed to three coinage Proclamations.

Order approving the grant of a Supplemental Charter to the King's School Canterbury.

Order approving the grant of a Supplemental Charter to the Animal Health Trust.

Order amending the Charter of the National Association of Boys Clubs.

Order approving amendments to the Supplemental Charter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Order appointing a Governor of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Incorporated Society of Valuers and Auctioneers seeking the grant of a Charter of Incorporation.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland seeking a Supplemental Charter.

1992

Order approving the grant of a Charter to the Royal College of Anaesthetists.

Order approving the grant of a Supplemental Charter to the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Order amending the Charter of the British Standards Institution.

Order amending the Charter of the Chartered Institute of Loss Adjusters.

Order proroguing Parliament.

Order directing the Lord Chancellor to cause the Great Seal to be affixed to a Proclamation dissolving Parliament.

Order directing the issue of Writs for the calling of a new Parliament.

Order amending the Charter of the Fellowship of Engineering.

Order amending the Charter of the Royal British Legion.

Order amending the Charter of the University of Keele.

Order approving a Report of a Committee on a Petition to the Visitor of the University of London.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation seeking a Charter of Incorporation.

Order amending the Supplemental Charter of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

Order directing the Lord Chancellor to cause the Great Seal to be affixed to a Proclamation concerning Bank Holidays.

Order approving the grant of a Supplementary Charter to the Royal Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland.

Order amending the Charter of the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce.

Order amending the Charter of the Royal Town Planning Institute.

Order re-appointing the Visitor of the Royal Postgraduate Medical School.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Engineering Council seeking a Supplemental Charter.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Chartered Institute of Marketing seeking a Supplemental Charter.

Order directing the Lord Chancellor to cause the Great Seal to be affixed to a coinage Proclamation.

Order granting a Charter to the Institute of Purchasing and Supply.

Order granting a Supplemental Charter to the Engineering Council.

Order granting a Supplemental Charter to the Chartered Institute of Marketing.

Order amending the Charter of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company.

Order amending the Charter of the Chartered Institute of Building.

Order amending the Charter of the University of Exeter.

Order amending the Charter of the of the University of Leeds.

Order amending the Charter of Somerville College, Oxford.

The Civil Service Commissioners Order 1992.

Order appointing the Clerk of the Privy Council.

Order appointing a member of the Governing Body of the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of Birkbeck College seeking a new Charter.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of Malvern College seeking a Supplemental Charter.

Order approving the grant of a Supplemental Charter to Malvern College.

Order directing the Lord Chancellor to cause the Great Seal to be affixed to a coinage Proclamation.

Order amending the Charter of the King George's Fund for Sailors.

Order amending the Charter of the British Psychological Society.

Order amending the Supplemental Charter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Royal British Legion seeking a Supplemental Charter.

Order amending the Charter of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Order amending the Charter of the University of Surrey.

Order referring to a Committee a Petition of the Institute of Legal Executives seeking a Charter of Incorporation.

Two Orders approving drafts of Hong Kong Letters Patent and Instructions to the Governor.

The list does not include Orders relating to the appointment or swearing of new Privy Counsellors. There were 18 such Orders in 1991 and 33 in 1992.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Crypt

Mr. Madden: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column 1022, if he will seek to arrange for the Crypt, St. Mary's Undercroft, to be licensed for marriages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: The Chapel of St. Mary Undercroft is not registered for marriage ceremonies of any denomination, as I indicated in my letter to the hon. Member for Bradford, West which I quoted in the House last week. However, I regret that in one respect the information which I gave to the hon. Member may inadvertently have been misleading. I have subsequently been advised that it is possible for a marriage to take place in the Chapel according to the rites of the Church of England if the Archbishop of Canterbury provides a licence under the Ecclesiastical Licences Act 1533. As to the possibility of registering the Chapel for marriages in the future, that would be a matter for the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Lord Chancellor and the Speaker and I have drawn the hon. Member's question to their attention.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Figures

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to review the procedure by which the unemployment figures are recorded and published.

Mr. McLoughlin: There are no plans to change current procedures for recording the unemployment figures derived from the claimant count and from the labour force survey. If there are any changes to publication arrangements these will be announced in advance, as usual.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the changes that have been made to the way unemployment figures have been calculated since 1979.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on 26 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *496*.

Unemployed Building Workers

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will give for each job title the number of building workers registered as unemployed in *(a)* the Bolton-Bury travel-to-work area and *(b)* the north-west region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The most recent estimates from the summer—June to August—1992 labour force survey show

that in the north-west region there were 16,000 people unemployed on the internationally agreed ILO definition who were previously employed in building trades. No information is available from the survey for travel-to-work areas.

The regional estimates for unemployed people by individual building occupations are all below 10,000.

Redundant Claimants

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many redundant people in receipt of an occupational or personal pension aged over 55 years are receiving reduced unemployment benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms. Joan Walley, dated 3 March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about the number of redundant people in receipt of an occupational or personal pension aged over 55 years who are receiving reduced unemployment benefit. This is something which falls within the responsibilities she has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately we do not collect the information you requested and it could only be obtained at disproportionate cost by examination of each of our client records. However, an analysis of the claims so far transferred to the new computer system we are currently introducing throughout the country, indicates that almost 4 per cent. of our clients, who are in receipt of unemployment benefit at full or reduced rate, have declared that they are in receipt of an occupational or personal pension. It is not possible to say how many of these are over 55 years of age.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Gas Extraction Industry

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what figures she has for the number of jobs dependent on the gas extraction industry.

Mr. McLoughlin: Estimates of employees in the extraction of mineral oil and natural gas industry are available from the census of employment. The most recent United Kingdom figure, from the September 1989 census is 43,000. Estimates for 1991 will be published in April 1993. The Department has no figures for people indirectly employed in any industry.

Defence-related Industries

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research her Department has commissioned or published on levels of recruitment of former workers in defence-related industries and the types and levels of skill available.

Mr. McLoughlin: In response to the July 1990 Defence White Paper "Options for Change", the Employment Department commissioned the Institute of Manpower Studies to research employers' experiences of the employment of ex-services personnel.

Women's Issues

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list *(a)* the women, and the organisations they are associated with and *(b)* the women's groups, who have been invited to advise or inform the ministerial sub-committee on women's issues.

Mr. McLoughlin: My noble Friend Baroness Denton, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and ministerial sub-committee member, is also co-chair of the Women's National Commission and has the responsibility of, among other things, informing the ministerial sub-committee about issues of concern to the WNC.

Youth Training

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of youth training scheme graduates have gained employment after the end of the scheme for each year since 1989.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested is given in the following table.

Youth Training: Great Britain
April 1988 to March 1992
Trainees gaining employment after completing agreed training

Period of leaving	*Gained employment after completing YT*[1] *(per cent.)*
April 1988 to March 1989	86
April 1989 to March 1990	86
April 1990 to March 1991	78
April 1991 to March 1992	70

Source: YT National Follow-up Survey.
[1] Including self-employment

Training Schemes

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have taken part in Government-sponsored training schemes in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984; and what those figures represent as a proportion of the total number of people registered as unemployed in Cambridgeshire in each of those years.

Mr. McLoughlin: This information is not available in the form requested and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Unemployment Costs

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the average cost of an unemployed person in lost tax receipts and benefit payments; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: For Great Britain in 1992-93, total unemployment-related benefits cost £9·3 billion spread across 2·74 million unemployed people—an average cost of an unemployed person of just under £3,400 per person per year. We do not consider that calculation of lost tax receipts is appropriate.

Fixed-term Contracts

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employees were on fixed-term contracts in each year since 1988 in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* in each standard region; and if she will express the national figure as a percentage of all employees.

Mr. McLoughlin: Available information for the United Kingdom and regions based on estimates from the spring —March to May—1992 labour force survey, are given in the following table. Comparable estimates for previous years are not available.

Employees on fixed term contracts, by region spring 1992 (not seasonally adjusted)

	Number ('000's)	*Per cent. of all employees*
United Kingdom[1]	581	2·7
Northern	43	3·8
Yorkshire and Humberside	44	2·3
East Midlands	32	1·9
East Anglia	20	2·4
South East	178	2·6
Greater London	69	2·8
Rest of South East	109	2·5
South West	43	2·5
West Midlands	32	1·6
North West	62	2·6
Wales	33	3·3
Scotland	84	4·2
Northern Ireland	10	2·1

[1] Excludes a small number who did not respond to the relevant LFS question.
Source: Labour Force Survey.

Employment Schemes

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average amount spent per person on *(a)* employment training, *(b)* youth training, *(c)* the job interview guarantee scheme and *(d)* job clubs for each year for which figures are available.

Mr. McLoughlin: The average amount spent per person on employment training, youth training, the job interview guarantee scheme and job clubs in Great Britain, for each year for which figures are available is as follows:

Programme	*1987-88* £	*1988-89* £	*1989-90* £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
ET	n/a	5,540	5,404	5,384	6,014
YT	n/a	n/a	2,715	2,687	2,801
JIG	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	57
Jobclub	[1]247	[1]190	140	[1]141	147

[1] External providers (contracted by the Employment Service only). Figures include Jobclubs run by the Employment Service.
Notes:
(1) Actual information later than 1990-91 is not available because average length of stay calculations are based on entrants to ET and EA in a given period and it is necessary to wait until all entrants in a period have left the programme.
(2) Employment Action began on 1 October 1991.
(3) The 1992-93 unit cost is for Employment Action in the programme's first six months of operation when the programme was building up.
(4) All figures are for Great Britain. These programmes are delivered in Scotland and Wales by Scottish Office and Welsh Office respectively.

Long-term Unemployed

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the United Kingdom have been registered unemployed for more than five years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: In January 1993 in the United Kingdom, there were 118,300 claimants who had been unemployed for more than five years. This represents a fall of 158,270, or 57 per cent., from the peak level in July 1987.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people are unemployed but ineligible for unemployment benefit because they had previously been self-employed; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available. There is no rule to prevent a previously self-employed person from registering as unemployed or claiming benefit, although the self-employed are normally excluded from entitlement to unemployment benefit because they fail to satisfy the national insurance contribution conditions. Nevertheless income support is available for unemployed people whose income and savings fall below specified levels.

Sellafield (Radioactive Leak)

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what quality factors are normally used by health physics staff at nuclear installations; what alterations were made in them during the recent radioactive leak at Sellafield; and for what reason.

Mr. McLoughlin: The quality factors normally used by health physics staff at nuclear installations for radiological protection purposes are:

	Factor
For 'x' rays, gamma rays and beta particles	QF = 1
For 'thermal' neutrons	QF = 2·3
For 'fast' neutrons	QF = 10
For alpha particles, multiple charged particles	QF = 20

Since different types of radiation have different biological effects, absorbed doses have to be multiplied by a "quality factor" before they can be expressed on a common "dose" scale for radiation protection purposes —that is, put in terms of the "dose equivalent". No alterations were made to them in assessing the potential dose of radiation to a member of the public during the recent releases of radioactivity from the B204 and B6 stacks at Sellafield.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 4 March 1993

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Somalia

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment Her Majesty's Government have made of whether the Serbian Government breached United Nations Security Council resolutions by secretly selling arms to Somalia via the federal directorate of supply and procurement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Any sale of arms by Serbia to Somalia would breach United Nations Security Council resolutions 757 and 733. We are aware of press reports of such deals, but we have no evidence to substantiate these.

Hong Kong

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the position reached in discussions with the Chinese Government on Hong Kong electoral issues.

Mr. Goodlad: The Governor of Hong Kong plans to make a full statement to the Legislative Council in Hong Kong on 5 March of the position reached with the Chinese side over electoral arrangements in Hong Kong. I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

HEALTH

NHS Staff

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many full-time equivalent *(a)* nursing, *(b)* midwifery, *(c)* management and *(d)* clerical and administrative staff were employed by the national health service in each district health authority of the Oxford regional health authority in each year since 1983.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figures are shown in the table. Many of the functions undertaken by senior nursing and professional staff are now reflected in the national health service management figures. This means it is unreliable to compare numbers within groups between the years shown in the table. Management still accounts for less than 1·8 per cent. of the NHS work force and the ratio of clinical to support staff has never been higher.

Whole-time equivalent staff in each district health authority of Oxford regional health authority

September 1983

	Nursing	*Midwifery*	*Management*	*Administration and clerical*
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	—	570
East Berkshire	1,970	160	—	470
West Berkshire	2,760	210	—	560
Aylesbury Vale	1,600	50	—	420
Wycombe	1,110	140	—	290
Milton Keynes	300	40	—	170
Kettering	1,330	120	—	290
Northampton	2,410	170	—	640
Oxfordshire	3,910	230	—	1,120
Ex-AHA staff	20	0	—	160
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,480	1,110	—	4,700

September 1984

	Nursing	*Midwifery*	*Management*	*Administration and clerical*
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	—	580
East Berkshire	2,000	160	—	500
West Berkshire	2,710	210	—	650
Aylesbury Vale	1,670	40	—	420
Wycombe	1,140	140	—	310
Milton Keynes	570	70	—	260
Kettering	1,390	130	—	320
Northampton	2,390	170	—	640
Oxfordshire	3,880	230	—	1,140
Ex-AHA staff	20	0	—	70
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,830	1,150	—	4,890

September 1985

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	0	570
East Berkshire	2,000	190	0	490
West Berkshire	2,700	210	0	670
Aylesbury Vale	1,620	50	0	360
Wycombe	1,140	140	0	310
Milton Keynes	610	80	0	280
Kettering	1,350	120	—	330
Northampton	2,350	170	0	580
Oxfordshire	3,790	240	0	1,090
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,630	1,200	—	4,690

September 1986

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	—	530
East Berkshire	1,970	190	10	500
West Berkshire	2,720	210	10	680
Aylesbury Vale	1,630	60	—	370
Wycombe	1,180	140	—	310
Milton Keynes	630	80	—	240
Kettering	1,350	120	—	330
Northampton	2,250	160	—	560
Oxfordshire	3,840	250	10	1,120
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,640	1,220	20	4,640

September 1987

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	—	550
East Berkshire	1,980	190	10	500
West Berkshire	2,730	210	10	710
Aylesbury Vale	1,630	60	—	360
Wycombe	1,150	150	—	310
Milton Keynes	670	90	—	270
Kettering	1,370	110	—	340
Northampton	2,270	160	—	570
Oxfordshire	3,980	250	10	1,130
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,860	1,230	30	4,730

September 1988

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	—	530
East Berkshire	2,100	180	10	480
West Berkshire	2,640	200	10	710
Aylesbury Vale	1,620	60	—	350
Wycombe	1,130	120	—	340
Milton Keynes	640	90	—	290
Kettering	1,380	120	—	360
Northampton	2,250	160	10	570
Oxfordshire	3,900	250	10	1,140
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,740	1,190	40	4,760

September 1989

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	10	550
East Berkshire	2,020	180	30	470
West Berkshire	2,740	210	10	710

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
Aylesbury Vale	1,520	60	20	340
Wycombe	1,190	120	10	360
Milton Keynes	730	90	20	300
Kettering	1,430	120	20	360
Northampton	2,210	160	30	570
Oxfordshire	3,850	240	50	1,200
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,760	1,200	200	4,860

September 1990

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	50	570
East Berkshire	2,040	190	40	560
West Berkshire	2,670	220	30	770
Aylesbury Vale	1,600	60	30	370
Wycombe	1,180	130	30	380
Milton Keynes	730	100	30	320
Kettering	1,450	140	50	350
Northampton	2,110	150	60	580
Oxfordshire	3,990	240	110	1,240
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,850	1,230	420	6,150

September 1991

	Nursing	Midwifery	Management	Administration and clerical
Oxford HQ and units	70	0	—	—
East Berkshire	2,290	220	—	—
West Berkshire	2,310	170	—	—
Aylesbury Vale	1,480	70	—	—
Wycombe	1,270	130	—	—
Milton Keynes	800	90	—	—
Kettering	1,460	140	—	—
Northampton	2,000	130	—	—
Oxfordshire	3,950	260	—	—
REGIONAL TOTAL	15,620	1,200	520	4,930

Note: In 1991 there has been a shift of Nursing and Midwifery staff from West Berkshire district health authority to East Berkshire district health authority due to the reallocation of Berkshire College of Nursing and Midwifery, Wexham park hospital from West to East Berkshire.

Environmental Health Prosecutions

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prosecutions were brought by environmental health officers in each of the last five years; and what percentage of *(a)* cases and *(b)* contested cases resulted in convictions.

Mr. Sackville: Information prior to 1991 is not held centrally.

During 1991, environmental health officers brought 1,143 prosecutions in connection with hygiene and microbiological contamination. In addition, there were 691 prosecutions relating to chemical contamination and extraneous matter, some of which related to food safety and some to quality. The available information does not show whether cases were successful or contested.

Tobacco Advertising

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received on the subject of continued tobacco advertising; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have received a number of representations. The Government will consider all representations received in keeping under review the need for further action to achieve the ambitious targets for reducing smoking set out in the "Health of the Nation".

HIV (Therapy)

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what monitoring her Department is undertaking on the use of combination therapy of AXT, DDI and Pyridinone for the treatment of HIV infection, as currently being tested in the United States; whether she envisages any trial use being made available in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We do not ourselves carry out clinical trials for HIV infection. This is the responsibility of the Medical Research Council. The Department does have an influence on the research programme through a concordat with the MRC.

Recently, there have been reports from the United States that resistance developed to the drugs AZT, DDI and pyridinones renders HIV non-viable. It has been suggested that combination therapy with these three drugs

may be an effective treatment for HIV disease. The MRC AIDS therapeutic trials committee, on which the Department of Health is represented, has identified combination therapy as one of a number of priority areas for further research.

So far all the evidence supporting use of this combination of drugs comes from laboratory studies. We do not know what the clinical significance will be. Unfortunately many therapies which are promising in the test tube do not give the hoped-for benefits to patients.

Surgery (Waiting Times)

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current average waiting period for *(a)* all operations, *(b)* cataract surgery, or the specialty within which such surgery falls and *(c)* hip replacement surgery, or the specialty within which such surgery falls; and what information is available as to the proportion of all people waiting for operations who are aged over 65 years.

Mr. Sackville: Waiting time information by specialty is published in "Hospital Waiting Lists, In-Patients and Day cases", a copy of which is in the Library. Waiting time information on individual conditions and by age of patients is not held centrally.

Out-patient Appointments

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce a system to limit waiting times for out-patient appointments.

Mr. Sackville: Under the patients charter, health authorities already set and publish local charter standards for first out-patient appointments, and from 1993-94 regional health authorities will set targets in their corporate contracts for local improvements.

Children (State Care)

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will calculate the cost to the Exchequer of a child placed in the care of the state, from birth to the age of majority, at current prices.

Mr. Yeo: The information available represents the average weekly unit costs to local authorities for children of all ages for various placements. The latest average figures for English authorities, published in "Children in Care; England and Wales; year ending 31 March 1991", are £102 per week for a foster placement, £536 per week for a community home placement and £943 for a registered voluntary homes placement. These averages represent the gross "direct costs". The costs of field social work support are excluded as are the charges which local authorities may recover for children accommodated by them. Information is not currently available about the placement histories of children looked after since birth.

Salmonellosis

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of death certificates on which salmonellosis is shown *(a)* as the main cause of death and *(b)* as a subsidiary cause of death, for the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The number of deaths, main cause and subsidiary, from salmonella infections, other than typhoid and paratyphoid fevers, ICD 003 in England and Wales, for the last five years for which figures are available are shown in the table.[1]

	Main cause	*Subsidiary*
1987	52	23
1988	58	36
1989	61	23
1990	68	28
1991	62	26

[1] Excluding neonatal deaths (0 to 27 days).

Heart Disease

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate of the annual cost of treatment for coronary heart disease; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not routinely collected centrally. The latest year for which figures are held is 1989-90. We estimate that in that year £540 million was spent on all forms of treatment of coronary heart disease in the national health service.

Homoeopathic Hospitals

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money was spent on each of the five homoeopathic hospitals in each year since 1990-91; and what changes in funding are planned following EC directive 92/73/EEC of 22 September 1992.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Northwick Park Hospital

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, columns *204-5*, what instructions she has given to doctors at Northwick Park Hospital Trust about involving patients or their general practitioners in discussions about contractual issues.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service executive has issued further guidance to the NHS about involving general practitioners and other clinicians in the contracting process under cover of EL(93)10 "Managing activity and change through contracting", copies of which are available in the Library.

Green Agenda

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the guidelines and targets set for the implementation of the May 1991 DOH green agenda in respect of *(a)* exploiting the NHS's purchasing power by specifying environmentally friendly products, *(b)* using contracting to create healthier environments, *(c)* producing a smoking policy manual, *(d)* saving 15 per cent. on energy over five years and *(e)* changing to unleaded fuel throughout the national health service by 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Supplies Authority—NHSSA—is responsible for procurement matters for the NHS. It is a customer-driven organisation and responds to its customers' requirements, which are

increasingly for environmentally friendly products. This is taken into account when procuring products and NHSSA is in the process of developing a policy, in partnership with customers and suppliers, to encourage wider usage of "green" products throughout the NHS.

In October 1992, guidance was issued to ensure that all sales of tobacco on NHS premises were stopped by the end of 1992, except to long-stay patients who are smokers, and to ensure that, by 31 May 1993, the NHS is smoke-free except for limited necessary provision of separate smoking rooms. A booklet of good practice in implementing smoking policies was issued jointly by the Department and the Health Education Authority. A copy is available in the Library.

In line with the Government-wide target, health authorities are set an overall target for reducing energy consumption by 15 per cent. over the five years from 1991-92. Guidance and advice has been issued to the NHS on options for attaining this reduction. The NHS management executive is monitoring progress towards its achievement.

Ambulance services, the main users of petrol within the NHS, are phasing out the use of leaded petrol in their fleets as part of their vehicle replacement programmes. This allows resources to be managed effectively and provides for the further option of diesel-powered vehicles.

Regional Health Authority Staff

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of staff employed in each of the regional health authority offices.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers of staff employed by regional health authorities—RHAs—are not directly comparable as some centrally manage NHS Supplies, blood transfusion, and ambulance services, as well as directly employing consultants and registrars for the health service in their region. Excluding these centrally maintained functions, we estimate a total of some 7,850 whole-time equivalent staff were employed by RHAs on 1 July 1992 or an average of 560 staff each. The number of each RHA is in the table:

	Number
Northern	656
Yorkshire	518
Trent	509
East Anglian	292
North West Thames	361
North East Thames	580
South East Thames	604
South West Thames	611
Wessex	331
Oxford	567
South Western	559
West Midlands	1,168
Mersey	313
North Western	785
TOTAL	7,854

Home Helps

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what were the costs per hour of the home help or home care service in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984, expressed both in actual prices and 1987 prices;

(2) what were the total numbers of home help or home care hours provided in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984; and, for each year and what were the average numbers of hours per user and per pensioner resident in the county for each year.

Mr. Yeo: The information is not held centrally. The numbers of clients, hours of service received by them and costs per hour of service are included in "Personal Social Services Statistics—Actuals" published annually by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. Several items of the CIPFA data, including hourly costs, are reproduced in "Key Indicators of Local Authority Services" published by the Department of Health. Copies of these publications covering the years up to 1990-91 are in the Library.

Fluoridation

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from local authorities about the proposed addition of fluoride to the North Yorkshire drinking water supply; and whether she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Human Tissue Tests

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what requirements there are for pharmaceutical companies to carry out human tissue tests in vitro prior to marketing their products.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. The requirement is for adequate and appropriate pharmacological and toxicological testing of proposed medicinal products before trials of such products in human subjects and before eventual marketing.

Certain accepted safety tests that are performed routinely on potential new medicines do use human cells in vitro to achieve their results. Other tests necessitate the use of animal models to reassure on safety issues, but research continues in order to ascertain whether in vitro tests could become valid substitutes.

Care Homes

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the numbers of places in local authority residential homes for the elderly in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984.

Mr. Yeo: The table shows the total number of places in local authority staffed homes in Cambridgeshire reported as being primarily for elderly people form 1987 onwards. Similar information is not available for earlier years or unstaffed homes.

Number of places in local authority staffed homes for elderly people Cambridgeshire 1987-92

As at 31 March	Number of places
1987	1,358
1988	1,344
1989	1,297
1990	1,249
1991	1,259
1992	1,150

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average age of people admitted to local authority residential homes for the elderly in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984.

Mr. Yeo: Information is collected centrally in age bands. The table shows the number of admissions, by age band, to local authority staffed homes in Cambridgeshire reported as being primarily for elderly people, from 1987 onwards. Similar information is not available for earlier years or unstaffed homes.

Number of admissions to local authority staffed homes for elderly people by age-band Cambridgeshire 1987-92

Year to 31 March	Age-band on admission				
	Under 65	65-74	75-84	85 and over	Total
1987	23	160	517	576	1,276
1988	45	255	992	797	2,089
1989	55	257	808	814	1,934
1990	32	221	1,021	875	2,149
1991	43	311	929	1,176	2,459
1992	51	284	1,027	1,077	2,439

Children (Unnatural Deaths)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will estimate the number and main causes of unnatural deaths of two-year-olds each year since 1981.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Unnatural deaths of two year olds in England and Wales from 1981 to 1990

ICD number		Year									
		1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
001-E999	All causes	299	289	284	243	278	259	274	272	268	239
E800-E999	External causes of injury and poisoning	81	81	75	75	69	56	70	64	73	64
E800-E807	Railway accidents	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1
E810-E819	Motor vehicle traffic accidents	10	29	21	20	11	14	26	20	20	19
E820-E829	Other vehicle accidents	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	1
E830-E848	Water, air and space transport accidents and vehicle accidents not elsewhere classifiable	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
E850-E869	Accidental poisoning by drugs, medicaments, biologicals, other solid and liquid substances, gases and vapours	3	1	2	1	0	1	2	1	1	0
E870-E879	Misadventure during medical care, abnormal reactions, late complications	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
E880-E888	Accidental falls	10	4	6	8	1	4	4	1	0	2
E890-E899	Accidents caused by fire and flames	18	8	17	19	17	20	9	15	20	15
E900-E929	Other accidents including late effects	30	27	13	13	28	13	18	14	17	16
E960-E969	Homicide and injury purposely inflicted by other person	1	6	7	7	5	3	7	4	2	6
E980-E989	Injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted	7	5	6	6	4	1	3	9	10	4

Myelograms

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to issue new guidelines about myelograms.

Mr. Sackville: I have no plans to issue guidelines.

Hospital Shops (Cigarettes)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what surveys have been conducted as to the number or estimated percentage of hospital shops that sell cigarettes.

Mr. Sackville: Guidance was issued to all national health service authorities and provider units in October

1992 requiring them to stop the sale of all tobacco on NHS premises, except to long-stay patients who are smokers, by 31 December 1992. No surveys have been conducted and implementation is being monitored through normal management arrangements.

Primary Health Care Forum

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral statement on 16 February, *Official Report*, columns 133-37, on the national health service in London, if she will list the membership of the Primary Health Care Forum; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Primary Health Care Forum will be the engine for change and improvement for primary care in London. Its members come from a variety of backgrounds, but common to all is their work in helping to stimulate and develop high quality primary and community services. This blend of experience will provide a sharp focus on the problems in the capital. Their task is crucial if the health care of Londoners is to improve as they and we would wish.

The Primary Health Care Forum members are:

Mr. Tim Chessells (Chairman), Chairman of the London Implementation Group.
Mr. Gerry Green, Regional General Manager, South East Thames and regional general manager lead on primary care.
Mrs. Ainna Fawcett-Henesy, Regional Nursing Oficer, South East Thames on secondment to LIG.
Professor Lesley Southgate, Professor of General Practice and Primary Care, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.
Ms. Hilary Scott, General Manager, Enfield and Haringey FHSA.
Dr. Peter Skolar, an inner London GP and Chairman of Camden and Islington Local Medical Committee.
Ms. Jean Rowe, Nurse Manager, Hillingdon Community Health Trust.
Mr. Geoff Shepherd, Chief Executive, Redbridge and Waltham Forrest DHA.
Dr. Rod Smith, GP fundholder, Caversham, Berkshire.
Dr. Sian Griffiths, Regional Director of Public Health, South West Thames RHA.
Mr. Terry Bamford, Director of Social Services, Kensington and Chelsea.
Dr. Jo Ivey Boufford, Director, King's Fund College.
Ms. Rosemary Glanville, Director of Medical Architecture Research Unit, University of North London and Non-Executive Director, West Lambeth Community Health Care Trust.
Mr. Jack Barnes, Health Care Directorate, NHS Management Executive.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statutory directions have been issued to local authorities to ensure that the needs of those with drug and alcohol problems are fairly considered under care in the community.

Mr. Yeo: The whole of the community care special transitional grant, which will be made available to local authorities, has been ring fenced to protect the funding of the entire range of community care services, including those for drug and alcohol misusers. The grant will reflect existing levels of provision in the alcohol and drug field. We have not, therefore, issued separate statutory directions on the distribution of these funds in respect of alcohol and drug misuse services. Statutory directions have, however, been issued to support payment of £3·3 million to enable local authorities to further develop voluntary sector services for those with alcohol and drug problems. We have also issued special guidance to local authorities in recognition of the particular challenge they face in meeting the needs of alcohol and drug misusers from 1 April 1993.

Teleconference Costs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of the primary care charter teleconference she held on Monday 22 February.

Dr. Mawhinney: A total of £53,217·92 including VAT.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has commissioned into the effectiveness of residential care and secure residential care for juvenile offenders.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The following research projects commissioned by the Department include examination of the effectiveness of residential care for all children including juvenile offenders.

1. Dartington Social Research Unit—Locking up children: secure provision within the child care system
   1978
2. Professor Timms/Professor Harris, University of Leicester—Between hospital and prison or thereabouts: a study of the implementation of the secure accommodation regulations
   1987
3. Dartington Social Research Unit—The experiences and careers of young people leaving youth treatment centres
   1989
4. Dartington Social Research Unit—Alternative care careers: the experience of very difficult adolescents outside youth treatment centre provision
   1989
5. Dartington Social Research Unit—Follow-up of young people from youth treatment centres
   1993
6. Professor Bottoms/Professor Knapp, University of Cambridge and University of Kent—Evaluation of the effectiveness of intermediate treatment
   1993
7. Professor Whitaker, University of York—culture and staff dynamics in children's homes
   Commissioned: 1992
8. Professor Sinclair—The role and quality of residential care
   Commissioned: 1993
9. Dartington Social Research Unit—Factors and processes associated with positive outcomes for troubled adolescents
   Commissioned: 1993

Copies of projects 1 to 4 are available in the Library.

Copies of projects 5 to 9 are not yet available. Copies will be placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Aldermaston

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on what progress has been made in solving the commissioning problems of the A91 building at Aldermaston; and when he now expects the building to become fully operational.

Mr. Aitken: The project definition study to evaluate the scope of work necessary to overcome the corrosion

problems of building A91 is due to report at the end of March 1993. This study will identify the most cost-effective repair option and confirm the date on which the building will become operational.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on each of the *(a)* major injuries, *(b)* other injuries, *(c)* dangerous occurences and *(d)* cases of disease, as defined in the reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1985 —SI, 1985, No. 2023—reported to the Health and Safety Executive by AWE Aldermaston during 1991.

Mr. Aitken: A total of 38 such incidents occurred in 1991. Further details are as follows:

(a) major injuries (Total four)—two fractures of the wrist; one severed fingertip; one fall from a bicycle;
(b) other injuries (Total 28)—three fractures of the hands and feet; seven minor accidents/illnesses; two sports injuries; eight strains various; one dog bite; one concussion; four injuries from falls; two eye injuries;
(c) dangerous occurrences (Total five)—pipe flange steam leak in the main boilerhouse; lightning induced cable fault and fire on inductance; ignition of striker assembly; two releases of chromate dust; and
(d) cases of disease (Total one)—suspected contamination by chromate dust (no residual effects found).

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when AWE Aldermaston plans to start the red commissioning stage of the A90 building.

Mr. Aitken: White commissioning is progressing well, but red commissioning will not commence until we are fully satisfied that the facility is ready to receive radio active material.

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the role and powers of the Health and Safety Executive concerning the atomic weapons establishments.

Mr. Aitken: The role and powers of the Health and Safety Executive in this respect were outlined on page 41 of the 12th report of the Select Committee on Defence in 1990.

Vulcan XH558

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to allow the Vulcan XH558 to fly at any of the events commemorating the 75th anniversary of the RAF; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: There are no plans to include the Vulcan in the RAF flypast for the royal review at RAF Marham on 1 April 1993, which will consist of current operational RAF aircraft, with Battle of Britain memorial flight aircraft providing a historical perspective for the service.

However, once the future of the Vulcan has been determined, it will be possible to consider the form of a farewell flypast.

Bandsmen

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column 779, if he will set out the approximate number of bandsmen employed on *(a)* Operation Corporate and *(b)* Operation Granby.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No Army bandsmen were deployed on Operation Corporate. On Operation Granby approximately 940 individual Army bandsmen were deployed.

Departmental Property

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why his Department's property, Queen Mary buildings in Stillington street, has been rendered uninhabitable; what was the cost of doing this; what is the intended future use of the buildings; and what consideration was given to using them to house the homeless in the interim period.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Queen Mary buildings consists of four blocks of six-storey flats. Two of the blocks are fully occupied; the other two have been vacated because repairs are necessary in order to rectify corrosion in steel reinforcement bars. Structural investigations have been carried out at a cost of £75,000 to establish the extent of the corrosion and remedial work is now in hand.

The flats are used by military personnel who need to live within close proximity of their place of work. When repairs have been completed all the flats will be required by my Department. The empty blocks are not suitable for occupation due to their structural condition.

Vehicle Leasing

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the numbers and makes of the vehicles currently being leased by *(a)* the Royal Air Force, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Army.

Mr. Aitken: The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force do not have vehicles on long-term lease. The Army, which has the largest fleet of support vehicles, has the following vehicles on lease in the United Kingdom and in Germany:

	Number
Iveco Ford tractor units	112
Mercedes Benz tractor units	36
Volvo tractor units	17
Leyland DAF tractor units	1
Volvo rigid vehicles	9
Leyland refrigerated unit	1
Leyland DAF minibuses	28
Renault minibuses	11
Ford transit minibus	1
Minibuses (makes unknown)[1]	6
Box body Luton type van (make unknown)[1]	1
Mechanical grab (make unknown)[1]	1
Volkswagen pick-up	1
Peugeot cars[2]	36
Fiat cars[2]	31
Rover cars	22
Ford cars	27
Nissan cars	2
Vauxhall cars	2
Cars in BAOR[1]	268
Volkswagen minibuses in BAOR	54
Vans in BAOR[1]	15

[1] The vehicle makes are unknown because the lease contract does not specify a vehicle make but calls for a vehicle type—for example 12 seater minibus.

[2] The Fiat and Peugeot cars are being phased out and replaced by Rovers as their lease period expires.

Bands

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *778*, on medical training of Army bands, what specific medical tasks medical assistants are qualified to undertake; and what is the equivalent level of qualifications in the Royal Army Medical Corps;

(2) to what level of civilian medical expertise *(a)* Royal Marine and *(b)* Royal Air Force band personnel are trained.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All service band personnel are trained to a level that equates to basic first aider in civilian qualifications. In addition, Royal Marine and RAF personnel are awarded the Health and Safety Executive certificate in first aid in the workplace.

Instruction includes emergency resuscitation using basic skills, control of haemorrhage, initial treatment of bone and joint injuries and the application of bandages and dressings. It also covers the basic nursing care of a patient, the management of intravenous infusion equipment, the transportation of casualties and casualty management under nuclear, biological and chemical conditions.

Chemical Discharges

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which chemicals listed under the Trade Effluents (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 1989 are discharged into the environment by facilities and sites operated by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: Central records are not maintained of the types and quantities of prescribed substances discharged by MOD. However, non-domestic discharges from individual MOD facilities and establishments are subject to prior agreement with the appropriate pollution control authorities. These agreements take into account the quantities, concentrations and types of prescribed substances contained in the discharges which are, in turn, dependent upon the particular processes or activities being undertaken.

Army Personnel Centre

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 10 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *176*, if he is now in a position to make a statement about his plans for an integrated army personnel centre outside London.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[pursuant to his reply, 13 January 1993, c. 760]:* The consultation period has now ended. A number of representations were received, one of which proposed an alternative building for the centre in Stockport at a purchase price to the Ministry of Defence of rather less than £4 million, against a purchase price of around £20 million for the original proposal. These representations are now being considered. No decisions have been taken and I will make a further statement on our intentions as soon as possible.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will *(a)* detail the cost, sample size and sample composition of the recent survey conducted by Research International for the Citizens Charter Unit and *(b)* place a copy of the research findings in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: *(a)* It is not our practice to reveal the cost of such contracts, as it could prejudice Her Majesty's Government's position when negotiating other contracts. All payments are, of course, open to scrutiny.

A sample of 940 adults was taken, which was representative of the country as a whole. The table gives a detailed profile of respondents.

(Base = 940)

	Per cent.
Sex: Male	49
Female	51
Age: 16-24	18
25-34	19
35-44	17
45-54	14
55-64	13
65+	19
Working Status:	
Full/part-time	50
Not working	30
Retired	20
Marital Status:	
Married	66
Widowed/separated/divorced	15
Single	19
Finished Full-time Education:	
16 years or under	65
17 years or over	35
Regions:	
Scotland	9
North/North West	18
Yorkshire/Humberside	9
Midlands/Anglia	20
London	12
South East	19
Wales/South West	13

(b) Copies of the research findings have been placed in the House of Commons and House of Lords Libraries.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what research his Department has undertaken on the possible effect of the national lottery on the income of charities and voluntary organisations.

Mr. Key: The report prepared for the Department by the GAH group of consultants considered information available from other countries on the possible effects of national and state lotteries on charitable incomes.

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent representations he has received on the effect of the national lottery on the income of charities and voluntary organisations.

Mr. Key: I have received a number of observations as to the likely effect on the incomes of charities and voluntary organisations—most recently from the Charities Aid Foundation, which wrote to all members of the Standing Committee on 4 February and the Council for Charitable Sport, which wrote to my right hon. Friend on 9 February.

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what direct consultations he has had with *(a)* voluntary organisations in the disablement field and *(b)* other voluntary organisations concerning the effect of the national lottery on their income.

Mr. Key: My right hon. Friend has met the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, which expressed its views on the lottery's effect on charities' income, along with a number of other observations on the national lottery. I have also had written representations from a number of voluntary organisations.

Sir John Hannam: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what study he has made of the effect of a national lottery on charitable giving in the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Key: I am aware of the report by DKM management consultants, which includes a chapter on the effect of the Irish national lottery on charitable incomes in the Republic of Ireland.

Package Holidays

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many people in the United Kingdom took overseas package holidays during 1992.

Mr. Key: Latest figures from the international passenger survey show that there were 10,571,000 holiday visits made by United Kingdom residents on marketed package holidays during the first three quarters of 1992 —22 per cent. higher than for the first three quarters of 1991. They represented 55 per cent. of all United Kingdom holiday visits overseas and 39 per cent. of all United Kingdom residents' visits abroad.

Sport

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the total tax revenue from sports and the total Government assistance to sport by way of grant in each EC country for the most recent available year.

Mr. Brooke: This information is not available.

Children's Play

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will establish a dedicated budget for children's play from central Government.

Mr. Brooke: The Sports Council will take over the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit's responsibilities for information, and playwork education and training after 31 March 1993 and fund these from its main budget. This represents a very positive way forward, and I see no need to introduce any other financial arrangements.

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will visit the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit to discuss the removal of ring fencing of money allocated to the unit by the Sports Council.

Mr. Brooke: In November, my hon. Friend, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, met the chairman and vice-chairman of the play unit to discuss our plans for supporting children's play after 31 March 1993. The issue of funding after this date is a matter for the Sports Council and I therefore see no need for a further meeting with the play unit.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the representations he has received about the future of the National Children's Play and Recreation Unit.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* I refer to the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 19 January, *Official Report*, column *131*. Between 15 January and 2 March, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, and I received 85 letters from hon. Members, 28 from local authorities, 50 from voluntary sector play organisations, 34 from other organisations and 17 from members of the public. A significant proportion of this correspondence consists of identical letters reaching the Department by a number of different routes, and fails to appreciate that funding will continue to be available to play through the Sports Council.

Irish Cannon

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the representations from the Irish Government about the future of the 16th century Irish cannon currently in the royal armouries.

Mr. Key: The two guns cast in London by Robert and John Owen in the late 1540s were bought in good faith from a reputable dealer in 1972. There have been various rumours in the subsequent 20 years, but no evidence about their origin. In June 1992 the National museum of Ireland claimed ownership, saying that an extensive police investigation was in progress. In October its acting keeper of antiquities visited the royal armouries and was given full access to their files. The position remains that no evidence has been presented to support the Irish claim and it seems sensible to await the outcome of their police investigation.

Tourist Boards

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has had over the proposed reduction in the grant to the English tourist board and the relation between this grant and others to other tourist bodies in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department has received a number of representations from the tourist industry about the level of English tourist board funding. The ETB is currently carrying out a review of its activities which will enable it to decide how its resources can be allocated most effectively in future.

Decisions on the levels of funding for the other national tourist boards are a matter for the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, based on their assessment of their particular priorities.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of the increase in the legal aid budget is due to increased payments on account to solicitors holding legal aid certificates in each of the last three years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information is available only in respect of payments on account made to both barristers and solicitors in respect of civil legal aid. The percentage of the increase in legal aid fund expenditure due to increased payments on account to both barristers and solicitors in those circumstances in each of the last three years was as follows:

	1989-90 £ million	*1990-91 £ million*	*1991-92 £ million*
Gross fund expenditure	580	690	910
Gross annual increase	89	110	220
Increase in payments on account	8·3	12·8	22·3
Percentage of increase attributable to increased payments on account	9·3	11·6	10·1

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what percentage of legal aid in each of the last three years was accounted for by payments on account.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The percentage of legal aid fund expenditure in each of the last three years accounted for by payments on account was as follows:

	1989-90 £ million	*1990-91 £ million*	*1991-92 £ million*
Gross fund expenditure	580	690	910
Payments on account	3·0 per cent.	4·4 per cent.	5·8 per cent.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Cox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the expected cost of the reorganisation of the outer London magistrates court system as proposed in Cm. 1829, "A New Framework for Local Justice"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Taylor: We have not yet formulated proposals on the future organisation of the magistrates courts in outer London. We are at present consulting the service on the options and issues. The cost of reorganisation will depend on the option for change which is selected. Any additional costs arising out of reorganisation will be recovered through the structural improvements made by the changes and by efficiency savings.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will publish his proposals for the reorganisation of the outer London magistrates courts by the end of February; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Taylor: We have recently issued a consultation paper about the future organisation of the magistrates courts service in London. Responses are required by 31 May. The Lord Chancellor and I will give careful consideration to the views of those in the service in London before reaching any decisions about its future.

Committal Proceedings

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether he will abolish formal committal proceedings in court under section 6(2) of the Magistrates Courts Act 1980 in cases where the defence lawyer accepts that there is a case to answer.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

Consideration of the reform of committal proceedings is within the remit of the Royal Commission on criminal justice. We shall be reviewing the future of these proceedings in the light of the commission's findings.

TRANSPORT

Light Dues

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on light dues.

Mr. Norris: We remain committed to the principle of funding the cost of navigational aids from light dues. We are, however, pursuing a number of initiatives in this regard. We have made a joint approach with the Irish Government to the European Commission proposing that the user should pay for navigational aids throughout the Community's waters. I have opened negotiations with the Irish Government with a view to increasing the level of contributions to the general lighthouse fund from sources within the Republic. I am not yet in a position to make an announcement on the difficult issue of light dues for pleasure craft. But work continues to identify an equitable and cost-effective charging system.

On 15 February 1990 my right hon. Friend the former Member for Hertsmere, when Secretary of State for Transport, announced his intention of moving from a net to a gross tonnage basis for the assessment of light dues in 1994. The general lighthouse authorities and the payers of light dues are consulting together as to what the effects would be on differing types and sizes of vessels. I expect to make a further announcement later in the year.

The tariff for light dues is usually revised annually so that the finances of the general lighthouse fund are maintained at a satisfactory level. Despite a substantial increase in the tariff last year, light dues revenue for 1992-93 was forecast to be 26 per cent. lower in real terms than in 1987. For the forthcoming year from 1 April I am today announcing an average increase in the tariff about of 3·5 per cent.

I am therefore laying regulations to increase the light dues voyage tariff by 1·5p to 43p per tonne with effect from 1 April; I am also increasing the tariff for periodical payments including those for fishing vessels, from £205 a year plus £21 per metre—for 10 m and over—to £212 and £22 respectively, with consequential increases in related rates.

Traffic Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what contribution his Department made to the conference held in London on 22 February, "Less Traffic, Better Towns".

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I addressed this conference and the head of the Department's urban and general directorate gave a talk on current departmental initiatives. Three other officials from the Department attended the conference.

Motorway Traffic

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will consider establishing indication markers on the back of vehicles not permitted to overtake in the third lane of motorways, as a contribution to road safety.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have no evidence of vehicles not permitted in the third lane regularly flouting the regulations and using that lane, and no plans to require any markings on vehicles not permitted to use the third lane.

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what type and size of vehicles are banned from overtaking in the third lane of motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Regulation 12 of the Motorways Traffic (England and Wales) Regulations, as amended by the Motorways Traffic (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 1992, stipulates the type and size of vehicles prohibited from the third lane of motorways. These are motor tractors, light or heavy locomotives, vehicles with a maximum laden weight exceeding 7·5 tonnes and those drawing trailers.

Trans-Pennine Study

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria he used to select the consultancy organisation that produced the trans-Pennine study strategy commissioned by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: As with any such consultancy award, the ability to deliver the work set out in the study brief at a competitive cost.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what penalty was provided in the contract with the consultancy responsible for producing the trans-Pennine study strategy report for failure to deliver the report on time.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: These kinds of commissions do not include a specific penalty for poor performance. If a consultant does not comply with the Department's requirements this would be taken into account when selecting tenderers for future commissions.

The time scale for delivery of this report was adjusted when the scope of the study was extended.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 19 February, *Official Report*, column *385*, if he will list the organisations that tendered for the trans-Pennine study strategy commissioned by his Department, and the estimated cost of producing the report which was put forward by each organisation.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We received tenders from Transportation Planning Associates, the MVA Consultancy, Alastair Dick and Associates and Wootton Jeffreys. The value of each tender is a commercially sensitive matter which we do not divulge.

A361

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total value of the outstanding disturbance claims arising from the building of the A361 Tiverton to Barnstaple link road; and what he estimates to be the interest accumulated on this sum.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The value of third-party claims arising from the construction of the A361 north Devon link road stages 2A and 2B would be difficult to quantify, as they are subject to negotiation between the claimant, the contractors, the consultants who supervise construction, and the Department. Compensation negotiated in respect of third-party claims does not attract interest.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many disturbance claims arising from the building of the A361 Tiverton to Barnstaple link road are still outstanding.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The table provides a breakdown of third-party claims arising from the construction of the A361 north Devon link road stages 2A and 2B.

	Number
Stage 2A	
Claims received	58
Claims settled	54
Claims yet to be resolved	4
Stage 2B	
Claims received	65
Claims settled	46
Claims repudiated	5
Claims on which no recent action has been taken by claimants	14

A1 (Road Works)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what dates the A1 carriageways in the area of Ferrybridge, South Yorkshire, have been restricted due to road, bridge or other works during the last five years.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Carriageway restrictions have been imposed on the A1 in the area of Ferrybridge to enable substantial maintenance or survey work to be undertaken on nine occasions in the last five years, as follows:

Scheme	Dates
A1 Safety fencing M62 to Redhouse	18 April 1988 to 19 June 1988
A1 Wentbridge to Darrington	6 February 1989 to 20 April 1989
A1 River Aire to M62	31 August 1989 to 15 December 1989
A1 Wentbridge access	15 January 1990 to 27 May 1990
A1 Topographical survey, Wentbridge	1 June 1990 to 31 August 1990
A1 Wentbridge to Barnsdale Bar	10 December 1990 to 13 April 1991
A1 Redhouse to Barnsdale Bar	12 May 1991 to 19 August 1991
A1 Fairburn village	11 November 1992 to 19 December 1992
A1 Darrington	22 February 1993 ongoing

The list does not include daytime lane closures of a few hours' duration at off-peak times for routine work, patching or safety fence repairs.

Road Traffic (Emissions)

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of *(a)* carbon monoxide, *(b)* nitrogen oxides and *(c)* volatile organic compounds are from road traffic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The contribution from road traffic to national emissions in 1990 was:

	Per cent.
Carbon monoxide	90
Nitrogen oxides	51
Volatile organic compounds	41

Over the next few years tight new emission standards are coming into force for cars, lorries and buses and these will lead to better air quality as older vehicles are phased out.

PRIME MINISTER

Agricultural Surpluses

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Prime Minister if he will raise at the next meeting of the European Council the availability of facilities within the EC to store agricultural surpluses.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 March.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 4 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others.

Marriage Counselling

Sir David Steel: To ask the Prime Minister what steps are taken to co-ordinate the work of the United Kingdom Departments of the Scottish and Welsh Offices concerned with Relate; and if he will make a statement on the grants for Relate for future years.

The Prime Minister *[pursuant to his reply, 8 February 1993, c. 421]*: The last two sentences should have read

"The Scottish Office provides a grant to Marriage Counselling Scotland. In 1993-94 this will amount to £87,288, an increase of one and a half per cent. compared with 1992-93."

EDUCATION

Primary Schools

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list for each local education authority area the number of pupils aged five to 11 years educated *(a)* within and *(b)* outside the maintained sector;

(2) what percentage of pupils aged five to 11 years in England are educated within the maintained sector.

Mr. Forth: The information requested for pupils attending schools in each local education authority area in England in January 1992 is shown in the table.

Pupils aged 5-11 years in maintained and non-maintained schools in each local education authority in England in January 1992
Ages at 31 August 1991

LEA	Maintained	Non-maintained	Percentage of pupils in maintained schools
City	171	377	31·2
Camden	10,189	3,133	76·5
Greenwich	19,253	904	95·5
Hackney	14,376	2,106	87·2
Hammersmith and Fulham	8,264	1,211	87·2
Islington	13,245	203	98·5
Kensington and Chelsea	5,514	5,619	49·5
Lambeth	16,645	914	94·8
Lewisham	18,123	1,124	94·2
Southwark	18,335	1,634	91·8
Tower Hamlets	18,410	106	99·4
Wandsworth	14,485	2,411	85·7
Westminster	8,593	2,516	77·4
Barking	13,468	0	100·0
Barnet	21,506	3,147	87·2
Bexley	18,135	430	97·7
Brent	19,029	930	95·3
Bromley	20,656	2,553	89·0
Croydon	23,912	3,595	86·9
Ealing	21,453	3,074	87·5
Enfield	21,139	808	96·3
Haringey	15,554	981	94·1
Harrow	15,744	1,659	90·5
Havering	19,284	433	97·8
Hillingdon	18,345	1,672	91·6
Hounslow	16,855	440	97·5
Kingston upon Thames	9,411	1,518	86·1
Merton	11,606	1,681	87·3
Newham	22,441	96	99·6
Redbridge	18,112	1,978	90·2
Richmond upon Thames	9,867	3,118	76·0
Sutton	12,533	970	92·8
Waltham Forest	18,038	484	97·4
Birmingham	97,122	3,056	96·9
Coventry	27,036	924	96·7

LEA	Maintained	Non-maintained	Percentage of pupils in maintained schools
Dudley	26,193	146	99·4
Sandwell	27,077	138	99·5
Solihull	17,640	1,146	93·9
Walsall	24,507	373	98·5
Wolverhampton	22,081	753	96·7
Knowsley	15,561	113	99·3
Liverpool	43,989	1,224	97·3
St. Helens	16,089	365	97·8
Sefton	24,934	1,567	94·1
Wirral	28,961	1,879	93·9
Bolton	24,368	950	96·2
Bury	15,112	763	95·2
Manchester	40,262	1,810	95·7
Oldham	22,041	694	96·9
Rochdale	19,875	284	98·6
Salford	19,812	929	95·5
Stockport	23,635	2,380	90·9
Tameside	20,116	63	99·7
Trafford	17,741	1,638	91·5
Wigan	27,974	0	100·0
Barnsley	19,153	38	99·8
Doncaster	27,134	418	98·5
Rotherham	23,341	158	99·3
Sheffield	39,344	1,116	97·2
Bradford	47,615	1,569	96·8
Calderdale	17,445	484	97·3
Kirklees	34,364	717	98·0
Leeds	58,869	2,302	96·2
Wakefield	27,716	1,295	95·5
Gateshead	16,360	699	95·9
Newcastle upon Tyne	21,548	2,242	90·6
North Tyneside	16,592	503	97·1
South Tyneside	14,006	31	99·8
Sunderland	27,630	610	97·8
Isles of Scilly	181	0	100·0
Avon	74,052	5,424	93·2
Bedfordshire	48,708	2,581	95·0
Berkshire	61,392	7,086	89·7
Buckinghamshire	54,085	4,755	91·9
Cambridgeshire	56,095	2,802	95·2
Cheshire	83,453	3,671	95·8
Cleveland	55,241	967	98·3
Cornwall	38,196	1,239	96·9
Cumbria	40,231	1,102	97·3
Derbyshire	77,922	2,280	97·2
Devon	78,334	5,177	93·8
Dorset	46,610	3,644	92·7
Durham	51,853	1,087	97·9
East Sussex	47,710	5,687	89·3
Essex	125,438	6,948	94·8
Gloucestershire	42,407	3,427	92·5
Hampshire	125,924	9,611	92·9
Hereford and Worcester	55,220	4,595	92·3
Hertfordshire	80,291	7,683	91·3
Humberside	77,284	1,644	97·9
Isle of Wight	9,588	426	95·7
Kent	124,793	9,297	93·1
Lancashire	123,100	4,134	96·8
Leicestershire	78,266	2,972	96·3
Lincolnshire	47,616	2,154	95·7
Norfolk	57,469	2,991	95·1
North Yorkshire	54,604	3,690	93·7
Northamptonshire	51,864	3,063	94·4
Northumberland	26,180	457	98·3
Nottinghamshire	84,742	3,369	96·2
Oxfordshire	43,121	4,878	89·8
Shropshire	34,509	2,434	93·4
Somerset	36,473	3,128	92·1
Staffordshire	90,572	2,316	97·5
Suffolk	50,266	3,488	93·5
Surrey	66,742	17,193	79·5
Warwickshire	39,431	2,661	93·7
West Sussex	52,107	5,127	91·0
Wiltshire	46,860	2,723	94·5
England	3,944,864	243,113	94·2

Nursery Education

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for education what proportions of three and four-year-olds attended state nursery schools or state nursery classes in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984.

Mr. Forth: The estimated percentages of the local three and four-year-old population attending maintained nursery schools and classes in Cambridgeshire local education authority for each of years 1984 to 1992 are shown in the table. The table also shows the percentages of such pupils being taught in infant classes in maintained primary schools.

Position as at January each year

Year	Nursery schools and classes	Infant classes
1992	12	32
1991	11	31
1990	11	34
1989	12	30
1988	12	30
1987	12	29
1986	12	28
1985	12	29
1984	11	27

Estimated percentages of three and four-year-old population attending maintained nursery schools and classes and infant classes in maintained primary schools in Cambridgeshire LEA.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Manufacturing (Midlands)

14. **Mr. Burden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the figures for manufacturing output in the midlands from the latest available date.

Mr. Portillo: According to provisional CSO figures for 1991, GDP for manufacturing industry at factor cost in the midlands was £21·1 billion, representing 20·3 of the United Kingdom total.

Actors

15. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on taxation arrangements for actors.

Mr. Dorrell: We have received very few representations recently.

Corporation Tax

16. **Mr. Duncan-Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the main rate of corporation tax in *(a)* Japan, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* France and *(d)* the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: The current main rates on distributed profits are 37½ per cent. in Japan, 36 per cent. in Germany, 33⅓ per cent. in France and 33 per cent. in the United Kingdom. In Germany a higher rate of 50 per cent. is applied to undistributed profits.

Finance Ministers

17. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the discussions at the February meeting of European Community Finance Ministers.

21. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the discussions at the February meeting of EC Finance Ministers.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Members to the reply my right hon. Friend the Paymaster-General gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) on 18 February, *Official Report*, col. *315*.

US Tariffs

18. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement concerning the economy and the imposition by the United States of America of tariffs upon United Kingdom-manufactured goods.

Mr. Portillo: The United Kingdom is concerned about recent developments in trade relations with the US, in particular the imposition of anti-dumping duties on steel, which could have a significant impact on sections of the steel industry. The United Kingdom believes that it is essential that the dialogue between the Commission and US continues and that these disputes do not escalate into a trade war.

Debt

19. **Mr. Merchant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the ratio of debt to gross domestic product in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Italy, *(c)* France and *(d)* Germany.

Mr. Portillo: The OECD estimates that the gross general Government debt to GDP ratio in 1992 was 42 per cent. in the United Kingdom, compared with 44 per cent. in Germany, 50 per cent. in France and 108 per cent. in Italy.

Value Added Tax

20. **Mr. McFall:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with representatives of charities and voluntary bodies on the possible imposition of VAT on their activities.

Mr. Nelson: None.

23. **Ms. Hoey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the removal of VAT payable on items of sanitary protection.

Mr. Nelson: I have received a number on the subject.

24. **Mr. Fatchett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning rates of VAT.

Mr. Nelson: Many representations have been received and these will be considered in the run-up to the Budget.

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the relative cost of sending publications by post in the United Kingdom and the other member states of the EC, when considering the question of extending VAT to books and magazines.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend is fully aware of the differing costs and VAT rates in member states on publications sent by post. It would be inappropriate for me to comment further in the period leading up to the Budget.

Retail Prices

22. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the latest figure for the annual increase in the retail prices index; and what were the comparable figures for January 1992 and January 1991.

Mr. Portillo: In January the headline rate of RPI inflation was 1·7 per cent., down sharply from 4·1 per cent. in January 1992 and 9 per cent. in January 1991. Headline inflation is now at its lowest level for more than 25 years.

Matrix Churchill

25. **Mr. Dalyell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how Customs and Excise prosecution policy has been reviewed since the Matrix Churchill trial.

Mr. Nelson: The prosecution policy of Customs and Excise, determined within its role as an independent prosecuting authority, is guided by the code for Crown prosecutors which sets out the evidential and public interest tests which should be addressed when considering

criminal prosecutions. The commissioners keep under review their prosecution policies in relation to the wide range of enforcement responsibilities laid to them, taking account of all relevant factors. One such factor will clearly be the findings of Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

Edinburgh Summit

26. **Ms. Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new projects are to go ahead in Britain as a consequence of the statement at the Edinburgh summit on European economic recovery.

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Paymaster-General gave to the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith) on 26 February, *Official Report*, column *765*.

Public Sector Leasing

27. **Mr. Adley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about public sector leasing policy.

Mr. Portillo: The autumn statement announced as part of the private finance initiative, certain changes affecting leasing by public sector bodies. As a form of procurement, leasing must be based on an assessment of value for money, taking into account the transfer of risk. If the great majority of the risk lies with the private sector, the capital value of leased assets will not be offset from departmental spending allocations or external financing limits. In addition, in the particular circumstances of the run-up to privatisation, British Rail will be allowed to lease some £150 million of new rolling stock.

Interim guidance on the private finance initiative as a whole was provided to Departments on 9 December and placed in the Library of the House. More detailed guidance on leasing will be available shortly.

Statutory rules require that local authorities in England and Wales should count leases as credit arrangements for which credit cover is needed, unless they are operating leases or other specified types of leases. In Scotland, authorities are similarly required to count certain categories of leases as capital transactions which must have capital allocation cover.

Unemployment

28. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the effect on tax revenues of changes in the level of unemployment in the south-east over the last year.

Mr. Dorrell: It is not possible to provide reliable estimates of the effects.

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the President of the European Commission's call for an emergency summit of the Group of Seven to co-ordinate measures to tackle unemployment.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* The Japanese Prime Minister is currently the chair of the Group of Seven and it is for him to respond to this proposal. On Saturday my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer hosted an informal meeting of the G7 Finance Ministers and central bank governors. Concern was expressed about the high level of unemployment in all countries and there was agreement on the need to strengthen non-inflationary growth. This meeting was in part to fulfil last year's economic summit request to Finance Ministers to strengthen co-operation and to intensify work to reduce obstacles to growth and thereby foster employment.

Repossessions

29. **Ms. Primarolo:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Building Societies Commission to discuss repossessions.

Mr. Dorrell: Treasury Ministers meet the chairman of the Building Societies Commission from time to time to discuss a wide range of issues.

Demand

30. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the level of total demand in the economy.

Mr. Portillo: Latest data indicate that the level of real domestic demand in the third quarter of 1992 was 0·6 per cent. higher than a year earlier. The majority of the Treasury's panel of independent forecasters and other outside forecasters expect it to pick up further in 1993. The Government will publish a new forecast in the financial statement and Budget report on 16 March.

Consumer Spending

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the monthly change in consumer spending for each month since January 1990.

Mr. Nelson: Estimates of consumers' expenditure are not compiled monthly. Quarterly estimates of the volume of consumers' expenditure are shown in table 3 of the publication "Economic Trends". Table 1 of this publication gives monthly estimates of the volume of retail sales which account for about two fifths of total consumers' expenditure. Copies of "Economic Trends" are available in the House of Commons Library.

Money Supply

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the percentage change in the money supply, M4, for each year since 1987.

Mr. Nelson: Figures for the percentage change in the money supply, M4, for each year since 1987 are available in table 28 of "Economic Trends", January and February 1993 issues.

Health and Education Expenditure

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been public spending on health and on education in each year since 1975 at current prices.

Mr. Portillo: Table 2.2 of the statistical supplement to the 1992 autumn statement, Cm. 2219, shows general Government expenditure by function from 1978-79. Figures are also available on a national accounts basis back to 1977, in cash terms, from the CSO database in the following series, identified by their database code:

GTGH: General Government expenditure on Health,
GTGN: General Government expenditure on Education.

The database can be accessed through the House of Commons Library.

Sterling (Devaluation)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the extent of the devaluation of the pound sterling against the basket of international currencies since Wednesday 23 September 1992, on the latest available figures.

Mr. Nelson: Between close of business in London on 23 September 1992 and opening 1 March 1993 the £ sterling has declined against its exchange rate index by 6·74 per cent.

Car Tax

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the total annual amount lost in taxation by the changes in car taxation announced in his autumn statement.

Sir John Cope: As a result of the abolition of car tax announced in the autumn statement it is estimated that there will be a total loss of revenue, including consequential VAT, of £750 million in 1993-94. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced at the time that the costs would be recouped in the next Budget through other taxes on motoring.

Bloodstock

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he next expects to meet representatives from the Jockey Club to discuss the level of VAT on bloodstock in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I meet representatives of the Jockey Club from time to time, but have no meeting scheduled at present.

Exchange Rates

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made of the benefits to industry of fixed exchange rates within the European Community.

Mr. Nelson: Exchange rate stability can be beneficial if there is sufficient convergence of monetary policy requirements among the countries concerned. The European Commission's 1990 report on the costs and benefits of economic and monetary union—"One Market, One Money"—surveyed a number of studies on this subject.

Wages and Salaries

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current estimate of annual change in levels of wages and salaries and of the retail prices index; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: In December underlying average earnings growth was 4¾ per cent. This is estimated to be the lowest since 1967. In January headline RPI inflation was 1.7 per cent., also the lowest since 1967.

Local Authorities (Loans)

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed in the quotas for lending to local authorities by the Public Works Loan Board.

Mr. Lamont: The public works loan commissioners have issued a circular today notifying local authorities of a change in the formula for calculating the quotas for 1993-94. The change reflects the Government's continued concern about the level of investments held by some authorities. The revised formula will reduce the quota available to local authorities which hold substantial investments, some of which could be used in place of fresh borrowing. It will have little or no effect on authorities where investments are small. Interest rates will continue to be set near but just below market rates.

A copy of the circular has been placed in the House Library.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Betts: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the extent to which the introduction of PEPs has increased investment in equities, unit trusts or investment trusts by type of investor; and to what extent it has resulted in switching from client equity, unit trust or investment trust investment.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* Over £6 billion had been invested in personal equity plans by April 1992. Many investors will have been encouraged to invest more in equities and in unit and investment trusts, but the detailed information requested in not available.

Charities

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what amounts charities received in tax concessions and Government grants in each of the last three financial years.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* The total cost of direct tax reliefs benefiting charities is not available. The latest information on the cost of income tax reliefs to charities, including donations by individuals and companies and relief for charities, is given in the table. In addition, inheritance tax relief for gifts and bequests to charities costs about £150 million per annum. The value of VAT reliefs specifically targeted on charities and the disabled is now worth some £150 million per annum. Information on grants to charities specifically in not available, but grants to the voluntary sector totalled £2·36 billion in 1989-90 and £2·68 billion in 1990-91. Comparable information for 1991-92 is not yet available.

	£ million[1] *Cost of income tax relief*
1990-91	500
1991-92	570
1992-93	530

[1]These figures comprise the total sum repaid to charities and scientific research associations in respect of tax credits on dividends, and income tax deducted at source from other investment income, payments under deeds of covenant, single donations by individuals and companies under the Gift Aid Scheme and donations under the payroll giving scheme. Information is not available about income received by these bodies without deduction of tax and no allowance in the figures is made for this.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the definition of employees of each of the health and social services boards as *(a)* Irish, *(b)* United Kingdom, *(c)* British and *(d)* EC citizens is the result of decisions by the boards or of self-definition by the employees.

Mr. Hanley: The health and social services boards do not define the nationality of their employees as Irish, United Kingdom, British or EC. Applicants are asked to indicate on the application form whether they are EC or non-EC nationals.

Caesarean Section Births

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many babies were born by Caesarean section in hospitals in Northern Ireland during each year since 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The figures for 1971-1986 and 1991 and 1992 are given in the table. Equivalent information is not available for the years 1987-1990 when adjustments were being made to the data collection process.

The figures in the table include both live and still births.

Babies born by caesarean section in hospitals in Northern Ireland 1971-1986, 1991, 1992

Year	*Live/still births in hospitals*	*Babies born in hospital by caesarean section*	*Caesarean births as a percentage of total*
1971	31,800	1,611	5
1972	30,464	1,520	5
1973	27,531	1,488	5
1974	28,047	1,537	5
1975	26,969	1,720	6
1976	26,936	2,015	7
1977	26,393	1,910	7
1978	27,380	2,042	7
1979	28,603	2,408	8
1980	28,240	2,328	8
1981	27,833	2,395	9
1982	27,420	2,410	9
1983	27,406	2,445	9
1984	28,897	2,633	9
1985	27,738	2,642	10
1986	28,333	2,762	10
1991	25,997	2,912	11
1992	25,508	2,821	11

Irish Language

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many schools at each level Irish is presently taught to a majority of the pupils at some stage in their education in that school; how many children have achieved a pass in Irish at *(a)* GCSE, *(b)* O-level and *(c)* A-level, in each of the last five years; what is the percentage of schools at each level offering Irish as a subject; how many of the schools offering Irish are (i) voluntary, (ii) controlled, (iii) maintained and (iv) integrated; and what is the percentage offering Irish in each of these categories.

Mr. Hanley: No information is available centrally on the number of primary schools which teach Irish.

The latest available information on the teaching of Irish at post-primary level relates to a survey conducted in respect of the 1988-89 academic year, based on a 10 per cent. sample of pupils.

That survey identified 92 schools in which Irish is taught. All are voluntary schools of which 29 are voluntary grammar schools and 63 are voluntary maintained secondary schools. These figures represent 50 per cent. and 79 per cent. respectively of the total number of schools in these categories. It is probable, however, that there are other schools in which Irish is taught, but which were not identified in the sample used in the survey.

The number of pupils who have obtained a pass in Irish at GCSE and A-level in each of the last five years is as follows:—

	GCSE		*A level*
GRADE	*A-C*	*D-G*	*A-E*
1988	1,046	469	203
1989	1,133	486	183
1990	955	436	229
1991	959	462	214
1992	1,037	504	270

1987 was the last year of NI GCE 'O' level examinations.

Educational Administration

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he intends to take, in the light of the consultative document, "Educational Administration in Northern Ireland", to consult parents and teachers before concluding which of the three possible systems set out in the document he intends to install; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Copies of the consultative document on educational administration in Northern Ireland have been widely distributed to schools, colleges, teachers unions and professional associations. The views of parents have been sought through the Parents Action Group on Education. Press advertisements have also been placed informing the public of the publication of the document and inviting comments by 25 June. Furthermore, there have been detailed press articles setting out the contents of the document. The Government have stressed that no decisions will be made until all representations have been considered.

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what study his Department has made of the potential impact on the current numbers employed within the five education and library boards, in the light of any move towards each of the three proposed models set out in chapters 6, 7 and 8 of the consultative document on educational administration in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The models described in the consultative document are intended to be illustrative of the broad frameworks within which educational services might be provided rather than to be detailed blueprints for future structures. They do not exclude consideration of any other models that might be suggested. The Government are committed to extensive consultation on the way ahead and will not make any final decisions until that consultation is completed. In these circumstances any notional assessment of the implications of the three models for present

levels of employment in the education and library boards was not considered to be of significant value at this stage of the review process.

Slopping Out

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when slopping out will end at each of the gaols; and if he will make a statement on prison refurbishment.

Mr. Mates: Slopping-out does not take place in either of the two Maghaberry prisons as integral sanitation is provided.

At the young offenders centre, Hydebank Wood, a system of electronic unlocking provides inmate access to sanitation at night in much of the accommodation. As a progressive regime operates in the centre, inmates normally progress into such facilities. Refurbishment at the centre costing £3·5 million over the next three years is planned.

At Belfast prison a major £25 million programme aimed at ending slopping-out and greatly improving facilities by the year 2000 has now been planned and elements of work already begun. Due to the scale and complexity of the project and the need for it to be done while the prison is largely operational, work will take some years and the first elements will be security related. The remainder involve installation of many improvements for prisoners and staff, including en-suite toilet facilities in the wings.

In both Maze and Magilligan prisons, prisoners often have their own cells. This allied to a regime which enabled them to spend much of the day out of cell, means that the sanitation difficulties experienced in other jurisdictions are much less prevalent. But we are currently developing a strategic plan for the entire prison estate in Northern Ireland which will include consideration of the installation of integral sanitation in these prisons.

Regulations

Mr. Sproat: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will place in the Library a list of all the regulations for which his Department is currently responsible with a descriptive title for each individual regulation.

Mr. Atkins: A provisional list of regulations that have an impact on business has recently been put together. Consideration will be given to placing the list in the Library once it has been fully checked for accuracy and consideration of definition.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Industrial Assistance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will provide a breakdown of regional preferential assistance to industry for each year since 1981-82, inclusive, at 1992-93 constant prices.

Mr. Sainsbury: The amounts spent on regional preferential assistance in Great Britain for the period 1981-82 to 1991-92 are set out in the table. The values are all expressed in terms of 1992-93 prices.

Government expenditure on Regional Preferential Assistance to Industry at 1992-93 prices

£ million

	England	Wales	Scotland	Great Britain
1981-82	818·0	367·5	432·6	1,618·1
1982-83	639·9	316·3	641·7	1,597·9
1983-84	498·6	199·2	379·5	1,077·3
1984-85	477·5	233·1	295·6	1,006·2
1985-86	372·6	207·4	295·2	875·2
1986-87	512·6	218·8	351·9	1,083·3
1987-88	372·4	182·2	210·8	765·4
1988-89	405·7	190·1	193·9	789·7
1989-90	317·5	158·5	174·0	650·0
1990-91	227·8	149·0	177·3	554·1
1991-92	157·6	160·5	134·4	452·5

£ million

Index	1992-93 prices
1978-79	35·5
1979-80	41·4
1980-81	49·0
1981-82	53·7
1982-83	57·6
1983-84	60·2
1984-85	63·3
1985-86	66·7
1986-87	68·9
1987-88	72·7
1988-89	78·0
1989-90	83·1
1990-91	89·7
1991-92	95·9
1992-93	100·0

Notes:
1. All figures are gross and include payments to Nationalised Industries.
2. Expenditure on a 1992-93 price basis for each year is calculated by applying the appropriate deflator to expenditure at current prices.
The items included in the expenditure are Regional Development Grants, Regional Selective Assistance and Regional Enterprise Grants; expenditure on Land and Factories by the English Industrial Estates Corporation, the Scottish and Welsh Development Agencies, the Development Board for Rural Wales, and the Highlands and Islands Development Board.

Gas Reserves

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the present known reserves of gas in terms of the number of years present consumption can be maintained.

Mr. Eggar: Figures for gas reserves and consumption are published annually in the Brown Book. [1]I expect to publish the 1993 edition around the end of April.

[1] "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom": a report to Parliament by the Minister for Energy.

Coal Imports

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much coal designated for power generation was imported into the United Kingdom in 1992; and how much was imported from each exporter.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of coal imported into the United Kingdom and designated for power generation[1] during 1992 was 7,568,000 tonnes. The breakdown by exporting countries is:

	Thousand tonnes
USA	3,390
Former USSR	2
Poland	52
Australia	1,224
South Africa	388
China	238
Colombia	2,274
Total imported coal	7,568

[1] Major electricity generating companies as defined in Energy Trends.

British Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what policy he has for developing *(a)* competitive and *(b)* comparative advantages within British industry.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *71*, and the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) on 27 January 1993, *Official Report*, column *735*.

Departmental Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many of the individuals currently acting as inspectors for his Department have business connections with the organisations criticised in the reports published by him.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Two. The accountant inspectors in the Guinness plc and Astra Holdings plc investigations are, or have been, partners in KPMG Peat Marwick. One of the firms that now form KPMG Peat Marwick was criticised in the inspectors' report on Orbit Holdings plc, published on 23 December 1981. The firm's Bermuda office was criticised in the inspectors' report on Alexander Howden Holding plc, published on 29 August 1990. In both cases, the events in question occurred between 10 and 20 years ago.

Recycling

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had from *(a)* Safeway and *(b)* other retail trade organisations on the problems of the comparative practices of the United Kingdom and German recycling industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the concerns that Safeways and others in the retail sector have about the damaging effects on the United Kingdom recycling industry of the German approach to packaging recycling. My Department has received written representations from individual retailers and the British Retail Consortium, and from wider industry groups such as the Consortium of the Packaging Chain. We are currently discussing the position with the interests concerned.

Aircraft Subsidies

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *772*, what information on US/EC aircraft production subsidies from defence programmes has been exchanged; when the meetings between EC and US representatives were held; and whether these or related issues have been raised recently with the United States Government.

Mr. Sainsbury: The first meeting to exchange information under the terms of the agreement is expected to take place at the end of March. Indirect support programmes will be among the topics covered at that meeting.

Global Technology Partnership Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many copies of the invitation to his Department's global technology partnership conference, to be held in Birmingham on 23 to 25 March, have been distributed; at what cost; which Ministers from his Department plan to attend; and what speeches by Ministers are planned.

Mr. Eggar: The global technology partnership conference is aimed at encouraging greater technology co-operation between businesses in the United Kingdom and those in the more industrialised developing countries. In addition to environmental improvement, such co-operation can lead to commercial opportunities for all businesses involved. To ensure this message was widespread, just over 8,500 invitations were distributed in the United Kingdom and the selected developing countries. The distribution costs of this were £5,392.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, will speak at the conference.

Petroleum Production

Mr. Bates: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the Government's latest forecasts of levels of United Kingdom petroleum production.

Mr. Eggar: The latest forecasts for petroleum production in the years 1993 to 1997 are as follows:

	Million tonnes
1993	85-105
1994	95-125
1995	95-125
1996	95-125
1997	85-120

The forecast is presented as a range of outcomes for each year to take account of the many uncertainties involved. The figures include stabilised crude oil, natural gas liquids and condensates.

These figures and a range of other information about the development of United Kingdom oil and gas resources may be obtained from "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom 1993"—the Brown Book—due to be published by the DTI at the end of April.

Flats (Terrorism Insurance)

Mr. Carrington: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the additional premiums to be charged for terrorism cover for blocks of flats.

Mr. Heseltine: The new arrangements under which the Government will act as reinsurer of last resort in respect of damage caused by terrorist activity apply primarily to industrial and commercial property. The arrangements do not affect the property and homes of private policy holders, and these continue to be covered by insurance companies in exactly the same way as in the past.

In the case of blocks of flats, the insurance companies have now decided that they will also continue to cover a property whose sum insured is under £2·5 million. Where a property's sum insured is above £2·5 million, the policy holder will be able to buy additional terrorism cover. The basic additional terrorism premium for a block of flats in London and other major city centres will be about one ninth of that for other industrial and commercial property and about one third in other parts of the country.

These arrangements for blocks of flats represent a significantly more modest contribution from policy holders than previously envisaged.

WALES

Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions the World Health Organisation's one hour guidelines on *(a)* sulphur dioxide and *(b)* ozone have been exceeded in Wales in each year since 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Records indicate that the World Health Organisation's one hour guidelines for ozone were exceeded in Wales on 21 occasions and 16 occasions in 1990 and 1992, respectively, but that no excesses occurred in 1991. For sulphur dioxide, the guidelines were exceeded on two occasions in 1992 but were not exceeded in either 1990 or 1991. No excesses have occurred to date in 1993 for sulphur dioxide or ozone.

Independent Schools

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received from independent schools regarding the provisions of the Education Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: One.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the likely impact of the Education Bill upon independent schools; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Independent schools will welcome the measures in the Education Bill which aim to prevent the employment of barred persons and also the proposals to exclude certain independent boarding schools from registration as children's homes. The Bill complements the long-established role of the independent sector in providing for greater choice and diversity to meet the needs of pupils and parents and in encouraging schools to specialise in their particular strengths.

Caesarean Section Births

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many babies were born by Caesarean section in Wales in each year since 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of caesarean deliveries reported in NHS hospitals in Wales since 1982 is given in the following table. Data for years prior to 1982 are not readily available and data for years after 1990 are not yet complete.

Caesarean section deliveries	*Number*
1982	3,311
1983	3,552
1984	3,820
1985	4,225
1986	4,238
1987	4,385
1988	4,508
1989	4,465
1990	4,204

Note:
Figures may understate the true position in that not all hospitals supply complete medical details on patient discharges and deaths.

Aberconwy

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he has received on the subject of granting objective 5(b) assisted area status to the borough of Aberconwy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I have received representations from Gwynedd county council and Aberconwy borough council seeking the inclusion of Aberconwy as an objective 5(b) area. This matter forms part of the wider consideration that is currently being given by my Department's structural funds review working group for Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys. I support strongly the case for its inclusion.

Local Government Reforms

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he now proposes to make a statement on his proposals concerning local government reforms.

Mr. David Hunt: I made a statement to the House on 1 March.

Health Service Resources

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what decisions he has reached regarding the allocation of resources for hospital and community health and related services in Wales for 1993-94.

Mr. David Hunt: I announced on 16 December my decision on the allocation of resources for the national health service in wales for 1993-94. Within the £1,974 million resources available we propose to allocate £1,465 million for hospital and community health services and the cash-limited element of the family health services in Wales.

For health authorities, the current resources within this sum which is subject to parliamentary approval to the supply estimates totals £1,290 million and represents a

cash increase of £47 million or 3·7 per cent. over 1992-93 estimated outturn provision. This sum, together with the additional £14 million which it is anticipated health authorities should, as a minimum, realise from further cost improvement savings and income generation schemes, will provide an effective increase in resources over 1992-93 of 5 per cent. Authorities will also benefit from further efficiency savings resulting from workload-related productivity increases through their contracts with service providers.

£8·5 million of the sum available for health authorities will be allocated to fund the continuing and full-year cost of developments which are being funded centrally in 1992-93. £8·6 million will be allocated to other centrally funded developments which will be announced in due course.

£29·4 million of the provision available will be made available for the discretionary use of health authorities. This provides for a 2·2 per cent. increase in HAs' discretionary revenue provision, or 0·4 per cent. in real terms, taking account of the 1·5 per cent. public sector pay restraint and the latest forecast of general inflation in 1993-94. In addition, authorities will be expected to generate the equivalent of at least a further 2 per cent. recurrent provision in efficiency savings from cash-releasing cost improvements and income generation schemes—1·3 per cent. minimum target—and productivity increases as throughput increase—0·7 per cent. minimum target—via their contracts with service providers.

Authorities should therefore be in a position to make further improvements in the services offered to patients in accordance with the objectives of the patients charter.

In order to continue progress toward weighted capitation funding, I have decided that all authorities will receive a minimum cash increase of 2 per cent. and that the balance of 0·2 per cent. will be provided to those authorities which would otherwise be more than 2 per cent. below their capitation formula targets in proportion to their respective distances from target.

The formula targets used in determining the distribution of the 0·2 per cent. further tranche of equalisation funding have been updated to take account of 1991 census data and other changes which affect the 1993-94 revenue allocations—notably revised capital charge estimates following the revaluation of the NHS estate, a further redefinition of capital—which alters the balance of HA capital to revenue expenditure—and a decision to exclude from the formula assessment revenue provision associated with long-stay hospital services for patients with a mental handicap which will be predominantly transferred to local authorities in due course as hospital services for this group are progressively replaced by community care.

These changes together with the equalisation funding provided over the past two years have together contributed to a narrowing of the range of differences between the most over-target and the most under-target HAs. Compared with 1991-92 when the range was from Powys at 14·61 per cent. over-target to Gwynedd 6·89 per cent. under-target, the position for 1993-94 prior to the distribution of the additional 0·2 per cent. equalisation provision shows a spread from Powys at 13·04 per cent. over-target to Clwyd at 4·82 per cent. under-target; and the latter figure reduces to 3·93 per cent. after its distribution.

The resultant discretionary revenue allocations for 1993-94, the increases which they represent over their 1992-93 discretionary revenue provision in cash and percentage terms, and the consequent revised distances from authorities latest formula targets are shown in the table 1.

Table 1

	Allocation	*Cash increase*		*Remaining distance from target*
	£ million	*£ million*	*per cent.*	*per cent.*
Clwyd	170·805	4·625	3·2	−3·93
East Dyfed	103·671	1·860	2·0	2·22
Gwent	180·176	3·250	2·1	−2·31
Gwynedd	101·341	2·119	2·4	−2·40
Mid Glamorgan	226·009	4·042	2·0	−1·30
Pembrokeshire	48·260	0·850	2·0	1·52
Powys	62·701	1·017	2·0	12·97
South Glamorgan	185·893	2·810	2·0	2·88
West Glamorgan	146·327	2·746	2·0	1·65

Steady progress therefore has been made toward the equalisation goal set in 1991; but the progress to date has been neither so great as to justify bringing forward the 1998-99 target date for achieving weighted capitation shares, nor so small as to require extending the process. However, the formula will be subject to further review in 1993-94 and this will focus particularly on whether any progress has been or might be achieved in distinguishing the separate effects of differential morbidity and social deprivation on relative needs; and, if so, how these effects might be better reflected in the formula. Since this further review could have an impact upon formula targets, I will look again at the target date for achieving weighted capitation funding in the light of whatever emerges from the review.

Under the new capital allocation arrangements which came into force on 1 April 1992, £80·1 million will be earmarked for the purpose of the Welsh major capital programme. The funding will be made available respectively via specific cash allocations or external financing limit approvals to those HAs and NHS trusts that are responsible for managing the schemes in question. Details of this programme are set out in table 2.

Table 2

Welsh capital programme centrally funded elements	*1993-94* £
WHCSA salaries	4·509
Dental Hospital re-equipping programme	0·398
Psychiatric/Joint finance/Psychiatric bridging finance	0·028
Breast Test Wales	0·453

Welsh capital programme centrally funded elements	*1993-94* £
Regional services	
Burns and plastic surgery—Morriston scheme IV	8·430
Adult cardiac services—UHW expansion	0·156
Paediatric cardiac	0·538
Club fees—United Kingdom transplant services	0·514
Blood transfusion centre	1·659
2nd cardiac unit	1·552
Sub-total regional services	12·849
Perinatal intensive care	0·269
Treatment centres	0·496
Information technology	13·351
Sub-total central programme	32·353

Health Authorities/National Health Service Trusts on-going schemes	*£ million*
Clwyd	
Wrexham Maelor Hospital NHS Trust – Phase 2A development	4·828
Glan Clwyd Hospital NHS Trust – Phase 2 development	0·364
East Dyfed	
Carmarthen and District NHS Trust – West Wales General Ward Block 3	0·937
West Wales General Ward Block 2 including day hospital	0·650
Gwent	
Gwent Community NHS Trust – Ebbw Vale Community Hospital – Phase 1	2·000
Torfaen Community Hospital – Phases 1 and 2	2·969
Gwent Health Authority – Nevill Hall remedial work	0·690
Gwynedd	
Gwynedd Health Authority – Ysbyty Gwynedd Phase 2	3·545
West Mon Community Hospital	3·157
North Meirionnydd Community Hospital	1·213
Mid Glamorgan	
Mid Glamorgan Health Authority – Taff Ely/ Rhondda DGH	2·200
Powys	
Powys Health Care NHS Trust – Brecon War Memorial Hospital Development	2·004
South Glamorgan	
Llandough Hospital NHS Trust – Barry Neighbourhood Hospital	3·700
South Glamorgan Health Authority – UHW Fire Precautions	6·000
UHW Energy Sources	0·355
Cardiff West (St. David's) Neighbourhood Hospital	0·800
West Glamorgan	
West Glamorgan Health Authority – Morriston Pathology	2·734
Neath Port Talbot DGH	3·800
Reserve	
For contractual claims, sundry creditors and miscellaneous rationalisation proposals	3·723
Sub-total on-going schemes	45·669

Health Authorities/National Health Service Trusts New developments	*£ million*
Clwyd	
Glan Clwyd Hospital NHS Trust—Ysbyty Glan Clwyd Psychiatric Unit	0·850
East Dyfed	
Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust—North Road Development	0·900
Gwent	
Gwent Community Trust—Nevill Hall MI Unit	0·700
Nevill Hall Elderly	0·400
Mid Glamorgan	
Bridgend and District NHS Trust—Princess of Wales—Phase 2	0·500
Powys	
Powys Health Care NHS Trust—Bronllys/Mid Wales Rationalisation	0·976
West Glamorgan	
Swansea NHS Trust—Singleton Hospital Theatres	1·500
Sub-total new developments	5·826

Note: The Welsh Capital Building Programme reflects a degree of over-programming in anticipation of slippage during the course of 1993-94.

A further £37·6 million will be made available for the discretionary minor capital requirements of HAs and the 14 national health service trusts which will be operational on 1 April 1993 as well as the minor capital needs of other service providers which are not managed by HAs. This sum will, however, be abated by some £4·3 million which will be transferred to HAs' current provision in recognition of the further redefinition of capital expenditure which will become effective on 1 April 1993. £16·1 million of the £33·3 million balance will be allocated in the form of additional revenue provision to the prospective purchasers of national health service trusts' services. It will thus form part of the trusts' income for 1993-94 which can then be recapitalised to meet their minor capital requirements. This capital expenditure will, together with any capital expenditure on major capital schemes, be taken into account in determining EFLs. Provisional EFLs for the 14 national health service trusts in Wales in 1993-94, which are subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary estimates, are shown in table 3. They will be subject to revision during the course of the year as a consequence of national health service trusts updating their financial plans for next year to take account of the revenue allocations to their prospective purchasers that are covered in this announcement.

Table 3
Provisional EFLs

	£ thousands
Glan Clwyd Hospital NHS trust	−39
Wrexham Maelor Hospital NHS trust	4,079
Gofal Cymuned Clwydian Community Care NHS trust	−160
Llanelli Dinefwr NHS trust	−1,700
Carmarthen and District NHS trust	1,035
Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS trust	916
Glan Hafren NHS trust	−3,712
Gwent Community trust	6,692
Bridgend and District NHS trust	86
Pembrokeshire NHS trust	−1,764
Powys Health Care NHS trust	2,680
Llandough Hospital NHS trust	1,890

	£ thousands
Swansea NHS trust	−107
South and East Wales Ambulance NHS trust	−771

(−) denotes a negative external financing limit (i.e., no new borrowing—the sum indicated being invested by the trust concerned or used to reduce outstanding debt).

A nominal capital allocation of £10,000 per authority will be allocated to HAs to cover their minor capital needs as purchasing organisations. Authorities will be able to supplement this by virement from revenue, subject to the normal 1 per cent. discretionary limit, if this nominal amount is insufficient. The £15·4 million balance of minor capital provision will be allocated between the HAs on behalf of their residual directly managed units. As was the case last year, and in order to ensure the fair distribution of this sum between service providers, it will be allocated between authorities pro rata to the revenue income which their units are expected to attract next year. In this way, capital provision, like revenue will "follow the patient".

The resultant capital allocations are set out in Table 4. Nominal sums only are included for the Pembrokeshire and Powys health authorities, since they are no longer responsible for the capital needs of any directly managed units.

Table 4

£ million

Authority	*Capital Allocation*
Clwyd	0·110
East Dyfed	0·542
Gwent	0·546
Gwynedd	2·535
Mid Glamorgan	4·178
Pembrokeshire	0·010
Powys	0·010
South Glamorgan	4·560
West Glamorgan	3·056

In addition, health authorities are expected to benefit from £5·4 million which will be generated in property sales in 1993-94.

A further £1·5 million will be held in reserve to meet the minor capital requirements of various other service providers such as the dental hospital and the Welsh Health Common Services Authority.

£11·8 million is to be made available to family health services authorities for their management and administration functions. The current element of this provision—£11·2 million represents a cash increase of 3·9 per cent. over 1992-93 provision and includes specific provision to finance the cost of strengthening the monitoring and accountability arrangements for GP fund holders and to buy in additional medical advice in respect of health promotion undertaken by general medical practitioners. The provision includes £0·13 million which will be differentially allocated between FHSAs in recognition of the need to make further progress toward the equalisation of discretionary resources between FHSAs. This differential distribution will result in the achievement of a good measure of equalisation in 1993-94 with most authorities achieving parity with each other and only two authorities, South Glamorgan and Powys, remaining significantly better funded than the rest.

The provision to be made available to FHSAs for the cash-limited general medical services funding for GP practice support costs is £42·7 million. This represents a cash increase of 9·6 per cent. over 1992-93 provision and includes £5·1 million for GP fund-holding practices' operating costs and preparatory fees for aspirant fund holders. This sum will not be distributed until after 1 April, when the number of participating practices in each FHSA area is known. Prospective GP fund holders have until 1 April to decide whether or not to participate in the scheme. Once the numbers are known, allocations for management support for practices operating funds, and preparatory fees for aspirant fundholders—both revenue and the capital costs associated with upgrading computer systems —will be calculated and allocated.

A further £0·9 million of the total sum available for cash-limited GMS needs has been held in reserve subject to the outcome of consultation with the service about the extension of the weighted capitation approach to this component of FHSA provision. It is anticipated that this reserve will be distributed early in 1993-94 in a way that enables a start to be made on the equalisation of this category of provision. Subject to this the allocations to be made to FHSAs are set out in table 5.

Table 5

	Allocations (£ million)		
	FHSA management and administration costs	*FHSA GP practice support costs*	
		Revenue	*Capital*
Clwyd	1·285	4·673	0·095
Dyfed	1·107	5·029	0·103
Gwent	1·350	5·897	0·120
Gwynedd	0·876	3·803	0·078
Mid Glamorgan	1·650	5·952	0·121
Powys	0·619	2·182	0·045
South Glamorgan	1·425	4·627	0·094
West Glamorgan	1·117	3·762	0·077

These allocations together represent another substantial increase in provision for hospital, community and family health services. They once again underline the Government's commitment to the NHS and recognise our undertaking to increase activity and maintain downward pressure on waiting times. They also serve to underpin patients charter guarantees about service availability and quality.

ENVIRONMENT

Ecological Balance

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effect on the ecological balance in the United Kingdom of *(a)* grey squirrels, *(b)* foxes, *(c)* Canada geese, *(d)* mink and *(e)* sparrow hawks.

Mr. Maclean: There is some difficulty in assessing what, if any, effects a given species has on the ecological balance throughout the United Kingdom. There are continual fluctuations in populations, with each variation being dependent upon many factors and the ecological balance can be seriously disturbed locally without the overall United Kingdom balance being disturbed.

The grey squirrel is a non-native species and now has spread through most parts of the United Kingdom. The only areas free from grey squirrels at present are north Scotland, Cumbria, Northumbria, Isle of Wight and north Wales. In all other areas which have been taken over by greys and where reds have become extinct, the reds have never managed to re-colonise. In coniferous habitats the populations of reds and greys are more evenly balanced. Grey squirrels also cause serious damage to growing timber and sometimes cereals, fruit, bulbs and crops.

Foxes can have severe localised impacts on ground nesting bird colonies if not controlled. For example, the RSPB is having to destroy foxes on the Abernethy game reserve because of the damage foxes are causing to the rare capercaillie. English Nature is also having to take similar action on one of its nature reserves. Apart from farm animals and birds, the main wildlife killed by foxes are: small rodents, earthworms, insects and rabbits.

Mink have spread throughout all parts of the United Kingdom and have even managed to swim the stretches of water and have colonised parts of the Western Isles. Detailed studies show that, overall, they have little impact so far on prey populations on mainland Britain although they have severe localised impacts on ground nesting bird colonies. Studies show that mink main food sources are fish, frogs and waterside birds especially moorhen, loot and mallard. Competition between mink and otter occurs when food sources and suitable breeding habitats become scarce.

Canada geese numbers are increasing rapidly from 19,000 in the 1970s to over 60,000 now. This non-native species causes damage to crops as well as amenity land in parks, public open spaces and golf courses. Goose droppings may pose health and safety risks and standing water in lakes become polluted. The geese can be aggressive while they are breeding and there are indications that the species competes with other wild birds for food and nest sites. My Department has set up a working group to assess the possible impacts on the environment, target appropriate research and plan a strategy for managing the species.

In the past 20 years sparrow hawk populations have increased rapidly from a low in the 1960s. There are now 25,000 breeding pairs, plus around 30,000 non-breeders. There is insufficient evidence to show what the effect is on other bird species, but their main food sources are small birds.

Rural Homelessness

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the recommendations of the report "Homelessness in Rural Areas" by the school of advanced urban studies, Bristol, in collaboration with Acre, for the Rural Development Commission, on the case for restricting the right to buy and offering portable discounts in rural areas where restrictive planning policies apply; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Baldry: We have no plans to restrict the right of tenants in rural areas to buy their homes. In certain designated rural areas current legislation allows landlords to impose restrictions on resale or permanent letting which favour local people, or reserve a right of pre-emption for 10 years.

We do not plan to introduce incentives in the form of portable discounts. The only purpose of these could be to compensate for the loss of the right to buy and we have no intention of preventing the exercise of that right by rural tenants.

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he intends to take on the findings of the report "Homelessness in Rural Areas" by the school of advanced urban studies, Bristol, in collaboration with Acre, for the Rural Development Commission in the incidence of homelessness in deep rural areas and the relative increase in overall rural homelessness.

Mr. Baldry: We will be reviewing our policy on the provision of social housing in rural areas in the light of research which we have ourselves commissioned. The proportion of the Housing Corporation's approved development programme going to the special rural programme, which is targeted on villages with populations of 3,000 or fewer, is to be increased from 5 per cent. in 1992-93 to 6 per cent. in 1993-94, and our policy of allowing development providing affordable housing in rural areas on sites which would not otherwise be available continues to bear fruit.

Merseyside Housing Associations

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much housing association grant was paid to each housing association operating on Merseyside during each of the last two financial years.

Mr. Baldry: The allocation of grant to individual housing associations is a matter for the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current annual rent for a housing association tenant on Merseyside; and by how much it has increased over each of the last four years.

Mr. Baldry: The average housing association rents for unfurnished accommodation in Merseyside metropolitan county are:

	Weekly	*Annual*	*Percentage change*
Registered fair rents (excluding service charges)[1]			
Q3 1992	25·52	1,327	+ 5
Q3 1991	24·75	1,267	+ 6

	Weekly	Annual	Percentage change
Q3 1990	22·88	1,190	+11
Q3 1989	20·65	1,074	
Assured rent (including service charges)[2]			
Q3 1992	30·13	1,566·76	+14
Q3 1991	26·45	1,375·40	+21
Q3 1990	21·92	1,139·84	

[1] Department of the Environment Rent Officer's Statistics.
[2] National Federation of Housing Associations CORE quarterly bulletin.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties are owned by housing associations on Merseyside.

Mr. Baldry: Housing association stock in the Merseyside region of the Housing Corporation, which includes Merseyside metropolitan county plus Ellesmere Port and Neston, Halton, Warrington and West Lancashire at 31 March 1992 was:

	Units
Self contained accommodation	50,500
	Bedspaces
Bedspaces in hostels	2,800

Source: The Housing Corporation HAR10/1 return.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 11 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *835*, about the take-up of grants under the home energy efficiency scheme, what plans he has to improve access to, and take-up of, the scheme in London.

Mr. Maclean: The home energy efficiency scheme is a nationwide scheme and access to the grant in London is the same as elsewhere. Take-up in London has been lower than in other parts of the country but is now beginning to improve. Neighbourhood energy action is undertaking a study into the causes of the low take-up in London and I await the results of that study with interest.

EC Environmental Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which policy proposals and priorities on the environment established by the Danish presidency of the European Council will have *(a)* immediate effect and *(b)* longer-term effect on environmental policy in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Maclean: The United Kingdom, with all other member states, will be bound by all environmental measures which are adopted by the Environment Council during the Danish Presidency and will need to ensure that they are properly implemented in the United Kingdom in the timescale specified in each measure.

Housing Resources

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are considered by the Housing Corporation in making decisions regarding the allocation of resources, other than the housing needs indicator; and what consideration is given to a housing authority's performance.

Mr. Baldry: Each year, the corporation discusses with individual local authorities their needs for housing association development and sets out the results in a series of regional policy statements which it publishes in July. These describe the types of development which the corporation is prepared to fund in each local authority area and the resources which it anticipates will be available in the following year. The policy statements form the background to the competitive bids which the corporation then invites from housing associations.

Following further consultations with local authorities, the corporation allocates funds to those bids which meet the locally identified needs at the lowest cost in terms of corporation subsidy, subject only to the association concerned achieving the corporation's regulatory standards. A summary of the framework and criteria for bids for the 1993-94 programme was published in November last year and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

Other than the HNI, the factor which most influences distribution between local authority areas is the availability of good-value bids, which in turn is influenced by the extent of the contributions made by the local authorities concerned either in terms of discounted land or cash contributions, including those made under the capital partnership arrangements announced last November.

As I said in my reply to the hon. Member on 10 February, allocations are made to housing associations and take no account of the performance of local authorities themselves, other than the way in which they work with housing associations in their capacity as housing "enablers".

Local Government Planning

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has concluded his consideration of the response from the London borough of Waltham Forest to the notice served on the authority on 29 July 1991 under section 19A of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. and learned Friend has now completed his careful consideration of the response which the London borough of Waltham Forest made to the notice served on the authority on 29 July 1991, as well as the authority's direct service organisation annual accounts for the financial years 1990-91 and 1991-92 which showed a continuing failure to achieve the required rate of return, and has today given a direction under section 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. The effect of the direction is that authority is required to seek the Secretary of State's consent when it wishes to undertake certain maintenance work in circumstances where it has not submitted the lowest tender.

Business and Environment Working Group

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the report of the financial sector working group of his advisory committee on business and the environment; and when he expects to respond.

Mr. Maclean: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment received the report of the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment's financial sector working group on 6 January. He and my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade have welcomed the report and circulated it widely. They will respond to this report and other recommendations from the advisory committee in response to the committee's final report, which is expected in May.

CBI (Waste Minimisation)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent communications he has had from the Confederation of British Industry on its programme of waste minimisation.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take against those local authorities whose direct labour organisations made significant financial losses in 1990-91.

Mr. Robin Squire: Statutory notices under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988 were served on 36 local authorities between July and September last year in respect of financial failure in 1990-91. My right hon. and learned Friend announced on 2 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *209*, his decision in respect of 10 authorities. He has now considered the responses of a further 16 authorities on which notices were served on 11 August 1992 and 2 September 1992. He has today given a direction under section 14 of the 1988 Act to Gloucestershire county council in respect of ground maintenance work.

My right hon. and learned Friend has decided to take no further action in respect of financial failure in 1990-91 by the London borough of Barnet—building cleaning; Blyth Valley borough council—new construction in excess of £50,000; Brighton borough council—highways and sewerage; Buckinghamshire county council—other cleaning; Castle Morpeth borough council—building maintenance; Dartford borough council—ground maintenance; Fareham borough council—ground maintenance; Harrogate borough council—ground maintenance; Holderness borough council—ground maintenance; North Norfolk district council—building maintenance; Reigate and Banstead borough council—building maintenance; Rotherham metropolitan borough council—ground maintenance; Surrey Heath borough council—highways and sewerage; West Lancashire district council—building maintenance; and Wycombe district council—highways and sewerage.

In all these cases the authority:—

(a) appears to have successfully responded to the financial losses incurred in 1990-91, and has either achieved a surplus in 1991-92, or expects to achieve the appropriate financial objective in 1992-93, or,

(b) has re-tendered or intends to re-tender very shortly the works in question, or,

(c) has disposed, or intends to dispose, of its direct labour organisation, or,

(d) is now operating below the "de minimis" level and, as such, is outside the scope of CCT legislation.

My right hon. and learned Friend is still considering responses from the remaining authorities on which notices were served in September 1992.

Council Tax

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has, from reports so far monitored by his Department, of the regional average council taxes in band C for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The regional average council taxes in band C reported to my Department so far are as follows:

	Band C	*Average*	*Community charge average*
Northern	590	460	527
North West	570	470	548
Yorkshire/Humberside	530	430	474
East Midlands	500	420	499
West Midlands	520	440	528
East Anglia	450	395	456
South East	470	480	464
London	500	495	422
South West	490	460	493
ENGLAND	505	460	486

The average council tax bill is likely to be more than £25 less for two people than under the Community charge.

City Challenge Scheme

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to issue formal guidance in the form of a planning policy guidance note or a circular to local authorities in respect of the city challenge scheme.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have no plans at present to issue formal guidance or a circular on planning policy for city challenge schemes.

Energy Efficiency

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money was invested in energy efficiency in the United Kingdom in *(a)* 1991 and *(b)* 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: A large part of the investment in the United Kingdom economy will have some effect on improving energy efficiency, although it is not possible to separate out an aggregate total of investment specifically directed at this purpose. However, in 1991 the amount of energy required per unit of GDP was some 18 per cent. lower than 1979.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensioners, Cambridgeshire

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many pensioners and people aged 85 years or over were resident in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

National Insurance

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what circumstances national insurance credits can be stopped for an unemployed person.

Mr. Burt: Generally, the same conditions for benefit apply to credits and are set out in regulations, copies of which are in the Library.

Circumstances in which the conditions are not satisfied include the following:

The unemployed person—
- ceases to register;
- is no longer available for work;
- is not considered to be actively seeking work;
- is engaged in employment (not the usual main occupation) for more than 8 hours in that week or
- is engaged in employed earner's employment (usual main occupation) on more than one day in the week or earnings exceed the lower earnings limit (currently £54 per week);
- fails to comply with a written notice to attend an interview in connection with his employment prospects;
- fails to comply with a written notice to an officer of the Department of Employment in order to make a written declaration in connection with his satisfaction of the conditions for unemployment benefit;
- becomes a student.

Mortgage Interest Payments

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants in the London borough of Lewisham received mortgage interest payments on homes where mortgages exceeded £100,000 or £200,000 in each year since 1987; and for how long the payments were received.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Housing Benefit

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants of housing benefit within the London borough of Lewisham have lived in *(a)* council housing, *(b)* other public sector housing and *(c)* private rented accommodation in each year since 1987.

Mr. Burt: Such information as is available is in the table. Information on tenants in other public sector housing is not available.

Quarter	*Local authority tenants*	*Private tenants*
1989		
May	20,164	8,666
August	20,469	8,895
November	*	*
1990		
February	20,092	10,385
May	20,040	10,468
August	20,071	11,109
November	20,055	11,345
1991		
February	20,568	11,906
May	20,241	12,738
August	20,453	15,837
November	*	*
1992		
February	20,099	9,009
May	20,543	11,976
August	20,326	11,979

Source: Housing Benefit Management Information System.

Notes:

Figures are only available for the new Housing Benefit scheme which was introduced in April 1988. Lewisham did not start submitting figures to the Department until May 1989 and have also failed to submit returns for quarters marked with an asterisk.

Although authorities have been asked to identify Housing Association tenants separately since May 1992, returns from Lewisham do not show this information.

Pensioners (Income)

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest information held about pensioners' income.

Miss Widdecombe: The presentation and calculation of pensioners' income data has been changed to harmonise with the households below average income series. The latest details, based on the 1989 family expenditure survey, are in the tables.

Investment income and occupational pensions for pensioners 1979 and 1989

	Source of income									
	Investment income					*Occupational pension income*				
	Percentage of units with investment income		*Average amount for those in receipt (£ per week, 1989 prices)*			*Percentage of units with occupational pension income*		*Average amount for those in receipt (£ per week, 1989 prices)*		
	1979	*1989*	*1979*	*1989*	*Per cent. growth 1979-89*	*1979*	*1989*	*1979*	*1989*	*Per cent. growth 1979-89*
All ages										
Pensioner couples	71	87	20·30	38·80	91	65	73	43·80	62·70	43
Single pensioners	57	69	13·60	24·90	83	32	47	29·00	41·60	44
All pensioner units	62	75	16·30	30·70	89	43	56	36·80	52·10	41
Recently retired pensioner units										
Pensioner couples	73	87	21·60	41·50	92	68	75	51·50	65·60	27
Single pensioners	60	64	12·60	31·50	150	37	55	31·20	41·40	33
All pensioner units	68	78	18·20	38·10	109	55	67	45·90	58·00	27

Notes:

1. Estimates of the percentage of pensioner units in receipt of occupational pension income are based upon data from the Family Expenditure Survey (1979 and 1989) and the GAD Survey of occupational pension schemes (1979 and 1987). They assume that the number of individual pensioners in receipt has remained at its 1987 level.
2. Estimates of percentage growth are based on unrounded income figures and may not therefore be the same as those calculated from the

rounded amounts shown in the table.
3. All average amounts are means.
4. All figures are before housing costs.
5. Pensioner units are defined as single people over state pension age and couples in which the husband is over state pension age.

The Average Incomes of Pensioners—1979 to 1989

Income Source	*Pensioner Couples*			*Single pensioners*			*All pensioner units*		
	Average Income (£ per week, 1989 prices)		*Percentage growth*	*Average Income (£ per week, 1989 prices)*		*Percentage growth*	*Average Income (£ per week, 1989 prices)*		*Percentage growth*
	1979	*1989*	*1979-89*	*1979*	*1989*	*1979-89*	*1979*	*1989*	*1979-89*
Earnings	21·60	18·80	−13	4·90	[4·10]	[−17]	10·70	9·40	−12
Benefit Income	72·60	80·70	11	48·00	55·00	15	56·50	64·30	14
Investment Income	14·50	33·70	133	7·70	17·00	121	10·00	23·10	130
Occupational Pension	27·00	45·70	69	8·40	17·40	107	14·80	27·60	86
Other Income	[0·70]	[0·50]	[−34]	0·50	[0·40]	[−17]	0·60	0·40	−24
Total gross income	136·50	179·40	31	69·50	93·90	35	92·70	124·90	35
Deductions	19·70	29·30	49	8·50	15·10	77	12·40	20·20	63
Total net income *Before* housing costs	116·80	150·10	29	61·00	78·80	29	80·30	104·70	30
Total net income *After* housing costs	101·50	138·50	36	50·40	67·10	33	68·10	93·00	37

Source: Family Expenditure Survey.
Notes:
[1] Components may not sum to totals owing to rounding.
[2] All average amounts are means.
[3] All figures are before housing costs unless otherwise stated.
[4] Pensioner units are defined as single people over state pension age and couples in which the husband is over state pension age.
[5] Square brackets [ ] denote figures that are particularly sensitive to sampling error (less than 100 cases).
[6] Estimates of percentage growth are based on unrounded income figures and may not therefore be the same as those calculated from the rounded amounts shown in the table.

Youth Unemployment

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the number of persons aged 16 to 18 years living in the city of Edinbrugh who are not in employment or in full-time education.

Mr. Burt: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Deregulation Unit

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those areas of legislation for which he is responsible which are subject to investigation by the deregulation unit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: No areas of legislation for which MAFF is responsible are subject to investigation by the DTI deregulation unit. MAFF's deregulation unit is co-ordinating a major deregulation programme within the department. All areas of legislation which impose burdens on industry will be subject to review with formal deregulation plans prepared for the main policy areas. One of the seven task forces to be set up following the Prime Minister's seminar on deregulation on 2 February will cover the food, drink and agriculture sector. It will be up to the task force chairman to decide what particular areas of MAFF legislation to investigate.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make it his policy to give a Minister in his Department responsibility for animal welfare; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Farm animals welfare is already included among the specific responsibilities of the Parliamentary Secretary, House of Commons, in the Department.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to other EC Agriculture Ministers on the transport of live animals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The Agriculture Council is currently awaiting proposals from the Commission for further measures to safeguard the welfare of animals in transport. The United Kingdom has made clear in the Council that it attaches high importance to the development of further Community rules on this subject.

EMPLOYMENT

Wages Councils

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) of 18 February, *Official Report*, columns *345-46*, which research study estimated that a 10 per cent. change in wages council rates would lead to a change in employment of 0·6 per cent.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: An estimate of this order of magnitude was made by Kaufman in 1989. That is one of several United Kingdom studies which show that statutory minima reduce job opportunities, although different estimates have been made about the size of the effects.

Trade Unions (Subscription Check-offs)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, further to her answer of 9 February, *Official Report*, column *590*, what representations she received, and on what dates, that employers should be required to seek renewed consent to check-off deductions from their employees each year.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Representations to Government are automatically treated as confidential. The Institute of Directors publicly supported annual renewal of consent to check-off deductions in its response of 23 October 1991 to the Green Paper "Industrial Relations in the 1990s". As a result of that consultation exercise, our proposal was modified and the period of reaffirmation was increased to three years.

Unemployment, Southampton

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many travel-to-work areas in each standard English economic region have *(a)* higher levels and *(b)* lower levels of unemployment than those areas including Southampton, Itchen on the latest available figures.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information requested can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Skill Centres

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *337-38*, on disposal of skills training agency or skill centre properties, if he will make a statement on the position of the remaining 10 properties.

Mr. McLoughlin: The ex-skill centre properties which remain unsold following the privatisation of the skills training agency are being actively marketed, on the open market, by the Department's agent surveyors, King Sturge and Co.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *337-38*, on closure of skill centres, if she will list *(a)* the original 60 skill centres and *(b)* the eight sold with the skills training agency which she understands no longer to be functioning.

Mr. McLoughlin: *(a)* the original 60 skill centres were:

Barking
Basildon
Bellshill
Billingham
Birmingham
Bradford
Bristol
Cardiff
Chelmsford
Cheshire
Chesterfield
Cumbria
Deptford
Dundee
Durham
East Lancashire
Edinburgh
Edinburgh RO
Enfield
Enfield (Annex)
Gloucester
Gwent
Hillington
Hull
Ipswich
Irvine
Lambeth
Leeds
Leicester
Letchworth
Liverpool
Manchester
Manchester RO
Medway
Milton Keynes
North Staffordshire
Northampton
Norwich
Perivale
Peterborough
Plymouth
Portsmouth
Preston
Reading
Redruth
Rochdale
St. Helens
Sheffield
Skyline House
Slough
Southampton
Southampton (Annex)
Swindon
Twickenham
Tyneside
Wakefield
West Glamorgan
West Sussex
Wigan
Wrexham

(b) The training businesses at the following properties, sold with the skills training agency, are understood to be no longer functioning:

Barking
Coventry
Peterborough
West Sussex
Wrexham

SCOTLAND

Water

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now intends to publish the Government's response to the consultation on options for the future of Scotland's water supplies.

Sir Hector Monro: Responses to the consultation paper are currently being studied. A large number of responses has been received and analysis will take time. A decision will be taken after this process is complete.

Crown Office Fraud Unit

Mr. Robin Cook: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those cases resulting in conviction on charges brought by the Crown Office fraud unit since its formation; and what were the dates of those convictions.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not the policy of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate to make known historic information which identifies cases against individuals, in particular where they have served their sentences. In accordance with that policy, the annual

report for the Crown Office and procurator fiscal service for 1991-92, which was placed in the Library, gives details, omitting names and dates, of cases which were prepared by the Crown Office fraud unit and were disposed of during that period. Between the establishment of the unit in 1984 and 1991 a total of 65 persons were convicted in cases which were prepared for prosecution by the fraud unit. Since the period 1991-92 three persons have been convicted of offences in three separate cases, two involving fraud and one of corruption, and they were respectively sentenced to imprisonment for three years and four years and to pay a fine of £400. Criminal proceedings are pending in eight cases, and in two further cases warrants have been issued for the arrest of the accused.

Prevention of Terrorism Acts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people have had their period of detention under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts extended pending the results of forensic tests.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend considers each application to extend the 48-hour period for which a person may be detained in light of arrest under section 14 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 very carefully. It would not be appropriate to categorise cases in the manner requested; but in his most recent report on the operation of the Act in 1992, Lord Colville, who looked at all the extension order files held by the Scottish Office for that year, states that

"... the proper criteria are being carefully observed in considering whether extensions should be granted".

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has decided the level of fee remission grant which will be available to parents under the assisted places scheme in school session 1993-94.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend is making £9·965 million available for fee remission in 1993-94. Fifty-eight schools across Scotland will participate in the scheme. This funding will enable the record number of 3,000 pupils currently benefiting to be maintained.

KS Properties Ltd.

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer on 2 February 1992, *Official Report*, columns *167-68*, when his Department was informed by the Scottish Development Agency that *(a)* the security for the loan was by mortgage deed with KS Properties Ltd., *(b)* the waiving of the security as a result of the decision made by his Department is shown in the accounts of KS Properties Ltd. as financially benefiting KS Properties Ltd. and *(c)* there are no loans from the Scottish Development Agency recorded in the accounts of KS Construction Ltd.

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to my hon. Friend.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Crime Prevention

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what crime prevention initiatives his Department is currently supporting.

Mr. Jack: We are currently supporting 20 safer cities projects and planning the creation of a new type of project in order to fulfil our objective of achieving up to 40. We are setting up a National Board of Crime Prevention. The ministerial group on crime prevention will meet soon with its new membership. We are developing a good practice guide to provide advice for practitioners on the setting up and evaluation of crime prevention initiatives.

We continue to provide a contribution to the core costs of Crime Concern, the independent crime prevention organisation, and to fund the Home Office crime prevention centre to provide training and advice to police crime prevention officers and others. We run various publicity programmes and, in particular, we are following up the success of Car Crime Prevention Year. We continue to encourage the establishment of neighbourhood watch schemes and of crime prevention panels and the development of local multi-agency partnerships for crime prevention. Our police research group is currently supporting 16 crime prevention research and development initiatives. In addition, the programme development unit is funding a range of innovative local projects, which includes schemes aimed at tackling family violence. The probation service grants scheme also supports crime prevention projects.

Amusement Arcades

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to amend the law relating to amusement arcades to restrict their use by children.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following the Home Office research study, "Amusement Machines: Dependency and Delinquency", published in July 1988, we have concluded that further legislative controls on the use of amusement machines by young people are not justified, although we continue to keep the need for legislation under review.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for the prevention of the manufacture and use of gaming machines which can be adjusted to make illegal pay-outs.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: None. We are satisfied that the enforcement powers of both the police and Gaming Board under the Gaming Act 1968 are sufficient to tackle any breaches of that Act as it relates to gaming machines.

Pornographic Material

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the penalty for possession of videotapes which are obscene by reason of the sexual or violent nature of their contents in cases where it is not alleged that trading has taken place.

Mr. Jack: The simple possession of an obscene videotape is not in itself a criminal offence, and the

Government have no plans to make it so. It is, however, an offence under the Criminal Justice Act 1988 to possess an indecent photograph, film or video recording of a child under the age of 16, subject to a maximum penalty on summary conviction of a level 5 fine (currently £5,000). It is also an offence under the Protection of Children Act 1978 to possess indecent pictures of this sort with a view to their distribution, while the Obscene Publications Act 1959, as amended by the Obscene Publications Act 1964, makes it an offence to have an obscene article for publication for gain. The offences under the 1959 and 1978 Acts are both subject to a maximum penalty on conviction on indictment of three years' imprisonment or an unlimited fine, or both. The Video Recordings Act 1984 prohibits the possesssion of an unclassified video recording for the purposes of supplying it, unless the recording is exempt from classification, or the supply, if it took place, would be an exempted supply. This offence is subject to a maximum penalty on summary conviction of a £20,000 fine.

The Government have no immediate plans to increase the penalties for these offences.

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy to engage private contractors to assist the police to search for and seize pornographic material and to recover the costs of such action from those who import, distribute, and sell, such material;

(2) what plans he has to encourage the use of section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959 to order the seizure of pornographic magazines, books, videos, and other materials; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what assessment he has made of the desirability of changing the rules of evidence so as to enable pornographic magazines, books, videos and other materials to be seized more cheaply and efficiently.

Mr. Jack: As I indicated in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point on 5 February at column *350*, we are currently considering what improvements might be made in the enforcement of the Obscene Publications Acts 1959 and 1964, and other legislation relating to obscenity. This includes consideration of possible improvements in the effectiveness of the operation of section 3 of the Obscene Publications Act 1959, which enables the police to obtain a magistrate's warrant to search for and seize obscene articles kept for publication for gain, and provides that such articles shall be brought before the magistrates for forfeiture.

The deployment of police resources in matters such as seizures is an operational matter for chief constables and it would not be right for my right hon. and learned Friend to seek to influence the priority which they attach to the various demands placed upon them. There is no evidence that chief constables are unaware of their powers in this area. In 1992, over 17,000 video tapes were seized by the Metropolitan and Greater Manchester forces alone.

Right of Silence

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to modify the right of silence so that courts may take fully into account the failure of defendants to answer questions put to them by an investigating officer in the presence of their solicitor and recorded on videotape.

Mr. Jack: The opportunities available for an accused person to state his position and the extent to which it might be appropriate for courts to draw proper inferences from his failure to do so, are among the matters being considered by the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, which will be taking into consideration both the existing safeguards for accused persons and the potential for any further safeguards. The Government intend to study the Royal Commission's conclusions before deciding any and if so what changes may be necessary.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to extend the function of the Child Support Agency to pay to the victims of crime the sum awarded to them by a court compensation order and to recover that sum from the offender against whom the order was made.

Mr. Jack: I am writing to the hon. Member to explain why the Government do not think that it would be appropriate to proceed in this way.

North Devon Police

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to increase the number of policemen on the beat in North Devon.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The deployment of resources within the Devon and Cornwall constabulary is a matter for the chief constable. He must decide how best to deploy his officers in order to meet his operational priorities and the objectives of his force.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will publish crime figures for North Devon for each year since 1979;

(2) if he will provide details of the numbers of crimes, by category, *(a)* committed and *(b)* solved in North Devon between April 1991 and April 1992.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected centrally for north Devon.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish figures showing the level of funding of Devon and Cornwall constabulary for each year since 1987 at 1987 prices.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The following table shows the total expenditure of the Devon and Cornwall constabulary for the years requested. Specific grant at the rate of 51 per cent. is paid on police expenditure.

Year	*Total net expenditure* £ *million*	*Expenditure at 1987-88 prices* £ *million*
1987-88	76·629	76·629
1988-89	85·227	79·443
1989-90	93·697	81·951
[1]1990-91	107·797	87·313
[1]1991-92	121·467	92·027
[1] [2]1992-93	137·560	99·971

[1] Because of change in capital financing arrangements in 1990 some caution should be used in comparing 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 with earlier years.

[2] Estimated expenditure.

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to enable the appointment of more police officers in Devon and Cornwall.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In view of the present economic situation, and the need to constrain public expenditure, my right hon. and learned Friend has decided that the costs of increases in establishment for police forces in 1993-94 cannot be justified.

Criminal Records

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will establish a national computer database for the immediate registration of bail orders for the information of any other court when considering an application for bail by an arrested person.

Mr. Jack: The national criminal record system, which is expected to come into operation in spring 1994, will have the facility for recording the remand status of the defendant, although it will only be at a later state of the project that courts will be able to enter and retrieve this information directly.

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to ensure that the computer database containing the criminal records of convicted persons is kept fully up to date, including brief facts of each offence, for the information of courts when sentencing or considering bail applications.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The national criminal record system, which is expected to come into operation in spring 1994, will be kept up to date through the direct input of data by police forces and will include brief details of each offence entered on the system.

Unit Fines

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review the operation of the unit fine system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The operation of the unit fine scheme is being carefully monitored. However, as it only came into operation on 1 October 1992, there is, at present, insufficient experience of its operation for precise or firm conclusions to be drawn about its effectiveness.

Prisons

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make more room available in prisons by removing prisoners who are not a danger to the public.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has no present intention of using his power under section 32 of the Criminal Justice Act 1982. This allows him to order the release of some prisoners, essentially non-violent property offenders, up to six months before what would otherwise have been their release date. It is, however, one of the principal aims of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 to ensure that the use of custody is imposed only on those offenders whose offences are so serious that custody is the only appropriate response or for whom custody is necessary in order to protect the public from serious harm.

Secure Schools

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take steps to provide secure schools in which any child over the age of 10 years can be educated in a kind but disciplined environment until the attainment of their normal school leaving age.

Mr. Jack: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement made by my right hon. and learned Friend on 2 March, *Official Report*, columns 139-42.

Prison Education

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the role of education in prisons; and if he will allow remission to prisoners who apply themselves to their education and obtain a recognised educational qualification while in prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice: The Way Ahead for the Prison Service in England and Wales" (Cm 1647), the Government stated that education is an essential part of the opportunities which must be provided in a prison. In recent years, the Government have significantly increased the resources devoted to education in prisons; the details of which were provided in the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Wakefield (Mr. Hinchliffe) on 16 December 1992 at column *215*.

It would not be right to use the royal prerogative to award a prisoner special remission for educational achievement. It is, however, a consideration which the Parole Board can take into account in determining whether an offender, who has shown a willingness by attitude or behaviour in custody to address his or her offending behaviour and has made positive efforts and progress in doing so, should be recommended for early release.

Ilfracombe (Drug-related Crime)

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about drugs-related crime in Ilfracombe, North Devon.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There has been a recent increase in drug-related crime in Ilfracombe. Devon and Cornwall constabulary is aware of the problem and is taking measures to tackle it.

Special Constables

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will encourage police authorities to recruit more special constables in order to protect the public in shopping centres, on public transport, in areas with a high incidence of burglary, and in other places where the public is particularly at risk.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A national recruitment campaign for special constables has been running since 1991. In the first year of the campaign, numbers increased by 14 per cent. to just over 18,000. The deployment of special constables within a police force area is a matter for the chief constable concerned, but they commonly perform patrol duties in public places.

Crime (Clear-up Rates)

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the clear-up rate for each police force in 1992 was accounted for by offences taken into consideration.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not yet available for 1992.

Prostitution

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussion he has had with senior police officers in areas of England and Wales which have the problems of prostitution and violence, as to action that will give protection to people living in such areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: From time to time Ministers meet senior police officers to discuss crime including prostitution and violence. It is for chief officers to decide what action should be taken in areas which are particularly affected by prostitution and violence.

Prevention of Terrorism Legislation

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list all cases since the passage of the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism legislation in which persons have been found guilty of offences connected with Irish terrorism in Great Britain, stating, in each case, the sentence imposed by the courts and whether the person concerned was originally arrested under the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism legislation; (2) how many persons have been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism legislation since 1974, stating (a) how many were charged with offences, (b) how many were tried, (c) how many were convicted, (d) in the cases of those convicted, how many were imprisoned and (e) in the cases of those sentenced to imprisonment, how many of those were sentenced for (i) up to three months, (ii) three to six months, (iii) one to nine months, (iv) nine to 12 months, (v) 12 to 18 months, (vi) 18 to 24 months and (vii) more than 24 months, listing these individually by length of sentence.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The available information is contained in the Home Office Statistical Bulletin on the operation of the Prevention of Terrorism legislation (issues 10/84 and 5/93).

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those persons who have been found to have been wrongfully imprisoned for offences in Great Britain connected with Irish terrorism, stating, in each case, whether he or she was originally arrested under Prevention of Terrorism legislation.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since the coming into force of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 on 29 November 1974, the convictions of the following people for offences connected with Northern Irish terrorism have been quashed by the Court of Appeal following a reference under section 17(1) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968:

Paul Hill	Patrick O'Neill
Gerard Conlon	Patrick Conlon* (deceased)
Patrick Armstrong	Patrick Hill
Carole Richardson	Robert Hunter
Anne Maguire*	Noel McIlkenny
Patrick Maguire	Hugh Callaghan
William Smyth*	William Power
Vincent Maguire	John Walker
Patrick Joseph Maguire*	Judith Ward

Of these the four marked with an asterisk had been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism legislation before being charged with the offences in question but this had no relevance to the quashing of their convictions.

There have been no referrals in such cases to the High Court in Scotland by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Information on people who have been convicted by the courts of offences connected with Northern Irish terrorism and whose convictions have subsequently been quashed by the Court of Appeal or the High Court in Scotland other than on a reference by the appropriate Secretary of State is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each of the terrorist incidents carried out in Great Britain since the enactment of the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism legislation with, for each incident, where appropriate, the numbers, respectively, of killed and injured.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974 came into effect on 29 November 1974. A list of terrorist incidents relating to Northern Irish terrorism in Great Britain since that date, including the date, the location and, where appropriate, the numbers of people killed or injured, is in the following table. Before 1989, only those incidents which caused death or injury are recorded.

Date	*Location*	*Incident*
30 November 1974	Talbot Public House, Little Chester Street, London, SW1	Device exploded. Eight people injured.
11 December 1974	Naval & Military Club, 94 Piccadilly, London W1	Device exploded. One person injured.
14 December 1974	Churchill Hotel, Portman Square, London W1	Four people injured in a shooting.
17 December 1974	GPO Telephone Exchange, Draycott Avenue, London, SW3	Device exploded. Four people injured.
17 December 1974	GPO Telephone Exchange, Chenies Street/ Tottenham Court Road, London	Device exploded. One person killed and one person injured.
18 December 1974	Harris Hearing Aid Consultant, 79 Park Street, Bristol	Device exploded. 17 people injured.
19 December 1974	Selfridges, Oxford Street, London W1	Device exploded. Nine people injured.
21 December 1974	Harrods, Knightsbridge, London SW1	Device exploded. One person injured.
23 December 1974	40 Westridge Road, Portswood, Southampton	Two people injured in shooting.
19 January 1975	Portman Hotel, Portman Square, London WC1	Five people injured in shooting.
19 January 1975	Carlton Tower Hotel, Sloane Street, London SW3	Two people injured in shooting.

Date	Location	Incident
23 January 1975	MWB Pumping Station, Woodford New Road, Forest Road, London E17	Device exploded. Three people injured.
27 January 1975	Lewis' Department Store, Manchester	Device exploded. 14 people injured.
27 January 1975	City Girl Boutique, Victoria Street, London, SW1	Device exploded. Two people injured.
27 January 1975	Ratners Jewellers, 147 Kensington High Street, London, W8	Device exploded. Four people injured.
26 February 1975	39 Fairholme Road, London, W14	One person killed in shooting.
30 June 1975	Indian Restaurant, Rusholme, Manchester	One person injured in shooting.
9 July 1975	Hope Street, Liverpool	One person injured in shooting.
10 July 1975	14 Oxford Road, Crosby, Liverpool	One person injured in shooting.
27 August 1975	Caterham Arms Public House, Caterham, Surrey	Device exploded. 40 people injured.
28 August 1975	Peter Browns Outfitters, 25 Oxford Street, London, W1	Device exploded. Seven people injured.
29 August 1975	K Shoe Shop Ltd., Kensington Church Street, London, SW7	Device exploded. One person killed.
5 September 1975	Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, London, W1	Device exploded. Two people killed and 63 people injured.
15 September 1975	12 Callcott Avenue, London, W8	Device exploded. One person injured.
15 September 1975	Alcan Aluminium Ltd., 30 Berkley Square, London, W1	Device exploded. One person injured.
22 September 1975	Portman Hotel, Portman Square, London, W1	Device exploded. Two people injured.
25 September 1975	Hare and Hounds Public House, Lower Boxley Road, Maidstone, Kent	Device exploded. Two people injured.
9 October 1975	Piccadilly, London, W1, near Green Park Tube	Device exploded. One person killed and 21 people injured.
23 October 1975	Campden Hill Square, London, W8	Device exploded. One person killed and one person injured.
29 October 1975	Trattoria Fiori, 87 Mount Street, London, W1	Device exploded. 18 people injured.
3 November 1975	Connaught Square, London, W2	Device exploded. Three people injured.
12 November 1975	Scotts Restaurant, 20/21 Mount Street, London, W1	Device exploded. One person killed and 15 people injured.
18 November 1975	Walton's Restaurant, Walton Street, London, SW3	Device exploded. Two people killed and 20 people injured.
27 November 1975	50 Village Road, Enfield, Middlesex	One person killed in shooting.
20 December 1975	Biddy Mulligans Public House, Kilburn High Road, London, NW6	Device exploded. Five people injured.
14 February 1976	Landward Court, Harrowby Street, London, W1	Device exploded. Two people injured.
21 February 1976	Selfridges, Oxford Street, London, W1	Device exploded. Five people injured
1 March 1976	Stanhope Gardens, London, SW7	Device exploded. One person injured.
4 March 1976	200 yards South of Cannon Street Station, London	Device exploded. Nine people injured.
	King Street, London, WC2	Device exploded. One person injured.
15 March 1976	Eastbound London Underground Train, West Ham, London	One person killed and one person injured in shooting.
16 March 1976	Stationary train, Wood Green Underground Station, London	Device exploded. One person injured.
27 March 1976	Ideal Home Exhibition, Olympia, London, W14	Device exploded. One person killed and 84 people injured.
2 February 1977	Department of Environment, Renshaw House, Renshaw Street, Liverpool	Device exploded. One person injured.
17 December 1978	Davies Street, Liverpool	Device exploded. One person injured.
	Maggs Department Store, Queens Road, Bristol	Device exploded. Seven people injured.
18 December 1978	London Central YMCA, Great Russell Street, London, WC1	Device exploded. One person injured.
	The Oasis Swimming Pool, 168 High Holborn, London, WC1	Device exploded. One person injured.
30 March 1979	Car park of the Palace of Westminster, London, SW1	Device exploded. One person killed.
17 December 1979	GPO Sorting Office, Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire	Device exploded. Two people injured.
	GPO Sorting Office, Charlton Green, Dover	Device exploded. Two people injured.
2 December 1980	Princess Louise Regiment, Territorial Army Centre, Hammersmith Road, London W6	Device exploded. Five people injured.
10 October 1981	Ebury Bridge Road, London, SW1	Device exploded. Two people killed and 39 people injured.
17 October 1981	76 South Croxted Road, London SE21	Device exploded. One person injured.
26 October 1981	Wimpy Bar, Oxford Street, London W1	Device exploded. One person killed.
23 November 1981	Royal Artillery HQ, Government House, Woolwich New Road, London SE18	Device exploded. Two people injured.
20 July 1982	South Carriage Road, Hyde Park, London W1	Device exploded. Four people killed and 28 people injured.
	Regents Park, London NW1	Device exploded. Seven people killed and 31 people injured.
10 December 1983	Royal Artillery Barracks, Repository Road, London SE18	Device exploded. Three people injured.
17 December 1983	Outside Harrods, Knightsbridge, London SW3	Device exploded. Six people killed and 91 people injured.
25 December 1983	Orchard Street, London W1	Device exploded. Two people injured.

Date	Location	Incident
12 October 1984	Grand Hotel, Brighton, Sussex	Device exploded. Five people killed and 30 people injured.
15/16 April 1987	Various	Devices exploded.
1 August 1988	Inglis Barracks, London SW7	Device exploded. One person killed and eight people injured.
20 February 1989	Ternhill Barracks, Shropshire	Device exploded. One person injured.
22 September 1989	Royal Marines School of Music, North Barracks, Deal, Kent	Device exploded. Eleven people killed and 21 people injured.
15 November 1989	Kelso Place, Kensington	Device made safe.
18 November 1989	Married Quarters, Messines Road, Colchester	Device exploded. Two people injured.
16 January 1990	Army HQ, SE District, Aldershot	Device made safe.
20 February 1990	Combined Services Recruitment Centre, Rutland Street, Leicester	Device exploded. Two people injured.
25 February 1990	Army Recruiting Office, New Road, Halifax	Device exploded.
14 May 1990	Service Education Centre, Eltham, South London	Device exploded. Five people injured.
16 May 1990	Army Recruiting Centre, Wembley, Middlesex	Device exploded. One person killed and four people injured.
1 June 1990	Lichfield Railway Station, Staffordshire	One person killed and two people injured in shooting.
9 June 1990	Honourable Artillery HQ, City Road, London	Device exploded. 19 people injured.
12 June 1990	West Green House,. Hartley Witney, Hampshire	Device made safe.
21 June 1990	RAF Stanmore Park, Uxbridge	Device exploded.
25 June 1990	Carlton Club, St. James, London	Device exploded. 20 people injured.
6 July 1990	The Strand, London, WC2	Device exploded.
20 July 1990	Stock Exchange, London	Device exploded.
30 July 1990	The Dog House, Hankham, Nr. Pevensey	Device exploded. One person killed.
6 August 1990	Woronzow Road, St. Johns Wood, London	Device made safe.
13 August 1990	Pye Barn, Moulsford, Didcot	Device made safe.
10 September 1990	Army and Navy Recruiting Office, Derby	Device exploded.
17 September 1990	Army Information Office, Finchley, London	One per injured in shooting.
18 September 1990	Milford, Staffordshire	Two people injured in shooting.
27 September 1990	Royal Overseas League, Park Place, London, WC1	Device made safe.
24 January 1991	Territorial Army Firing Range, Cannock Chase, Staffordshire	Device exploded.
7 February 1991	Downing Street, London, SW1	Three mortar bombs fired. One person injured.
18 February 1991	Paddington Station, London	Device exploded.
18 February 1991	Victoria Station, London	Device exploded. One person killed and 38 people injured.
25 February 1991	Napsbury Lane, St. Albans	Device exploded.
3 April 1991	Preston Railway Station, Preston, Lancashire	Devices made safe.
5 April 1991	Arndale Shopping Centre, Manchester	Devices exploded.
28 June 1991	Beck Theatre, Hayes, Middlesex	Device made safe.
30 June 1991	Royal Navy & RAF Recruiting Office, Fishergate Centre, Preston	Device made safe.
5 August 1991	Cambridge Public House, Charing Cross Road, London	Device exploded.
29 August 1991	London Underground Depot, Hammersmith	Devices made safe.
31 August 1991	Bargain Bookshop, Charing Cross Road, London	Device made safe.
15 November 1991	Old Barclays Bank, St. Peters Street, St. Albans, Hertfordshire	Device exploded. Two people killed and one person injured.
1 December 1991	The Discount Furniture Store, Habitat, The World of Leather, The Reject Shop, Tottenham Court Road	Devices exploded.
2 December 1991	Littlewoods, Oxford Street, London, W1	Devices exploded.
7/8 December 1991	Various locations in Blackpool	Devices discovered.
8 December 1991	Arndale Centre, Manchester	Devices exploded.
14 December 1991	Brent Cross Shopping Centre	Devices discovered
15 December 1991	Sainsbury Wing, National Gallery, London, WC2	Device exploded.
16 December 1991	Railway line near Clapham Junction	Device exploded.
23 December 1991	Ilford Underground Depot	Device exploded.
	Neasden Underground Depot	Device exploded.
	Train at Harrow-on-the-Hill	Device exploded.
10 January 1992	Whitehall Place, London, SW1	Device exploded.
17 January 1992	Marquis of Granby PH, Shaftesbury Avenue, London	Devices discovered.
30 January 1992	Elephant & Castle Underground Depot, London	Devices discovered.
3 February 1992	Neasden Underground Depot	Device discovered.
7 February 1992	London Underground Sidings between Barking and Upney Stations	Device exploded.
11 February 1992	Telephone box, Parliament Street, London	Device made safe.
28 February 1992	London Bridge Railway Station, London	Device exploded. 29 people injured.
29 February 1992	Crown Prosecution Service, Furnival Street, London	Device exploded. Two people injured.
1 March 1992	White Hart Lane BR Station Tottenham, London	Device made safe.
10 March 1992	Nr. Wandsworth Common Railway Station, London	Device exploded.

Date	Location	Incident
6 April 1992	Bridle Lane, Nr. Piccadilly Circus, London	Device exploded.
10 April 1992	St. Mary's Axe, City of London	Device exploded. Three people killed and 91 people injured.
11 April 1992	Staple Corner Junction of M1 and North Circular	Device exploded.
13 April 1992	Army Careers Information Office, Derby	One person killed on shooting.
9-10 May 1992	MetroCentre, Gateshead	Devices exploded.
7 June 1992	Royal Festival Hall, London	Devise exploded.
8 June 1992	A64 Leeds—York Nr. Tadcaster, North Yorkshire	One person killed and one person injured in shooting.
10 June 1992	Wilcox Place, Victoria Street	Device exploded.
15 June 1992	St. Albans Street, Nr. Piccadilly Circus	Device exploded.
17-18 June 1992	Marks and Spencers, Leeds	Device made safe.
17-18 June 1992	Stop and Shop, Leeds	Device exploded.
17-18 June 1992	Waterstones Bookshops, Leeds	Devices discovered.
25 June 1992	Coleman Street, City of London	Device exploded. One person injured.
30/31 July 1992	Milton Keynes (Shops, Library)	Device exploded.
25 August 1992	Shropshire Regimental Museum and two furniture shops, Shrewsbury	Devices exploded.
6 September 1992	London Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, London	Device exploded.
17 September 1992	Madame Tussaud's, Marylebone Road, London	Devices exploded.
	The Planetarium, Marylebone Road, London	Device exploded.
	Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London	Devices exploded.
7 October 1992	Junction of The Haymarket and Panton Street, Piccadilly	Device exploded. Five people injured.
	Near Centre Point, Flitcroft Street, London, WC2	Device exploded.
8 October 1992	Tooley Street, London, SE1	Device exploded. One person injured.
	Melcombe Street, London, NW1	Device exploded
9 October 1992	Royal British Legion, Nursery Road, Southgate N14	Device exploded
	Car Park, Arnos Grove Underground Station	Device exploded.
10 October 1992	Paddington Green PS, Harrow Road, Paddington, W2	Device exploded. One person injured.
12 October 1992	Sussex Arms Public House, Long Acre, Covent Garden	Device exploded. One person killed and four people injured.
19 October 1992	Novotel Hotel, Shortlands, Hammersmith, W6	Device exploded.
	Oxenden St., London, SW1	Device exploded. Two people injured.
21 October 1992	Railway Line, Nr. Silver Street Station, Edmonton	Device exploded. Two people injured.
	Princess Louise Territorial Army Centre, Hammersmith Road, W6	Device exploded. Three people injured.
21 October 1992	Railway Line, near Harrow Road (junction with Furness Road), NW10	Device exploded.
22 October 1992	Sewage Pipe, Wick Lane, E3	Device exploded.
25 October 1992	25-28 Morpeth Terrace, London, SW1	Device exploded.
30 October 1992	Whitehall, London, SW1, (near Downing Street)	Device exploded.
14 November 1992	Stoke Newington Road, London, N16	Device discovered. One person injured in shooting.
15 November 1992	Canada Tower, Canary Wharf	Device made safe.
16 November 1992	Collingwood Street, Bethnel Green, E1	Device made safe.
1 December 1992	Stephens Street/Tottenham Court Road	Device made safe.
3 December 1992	Deansgate and Cateaton Street, Manchester	Two devices exploded. 64 people injured.
9 December 1992	Woodside Park Underground Station, North London	Device exploded.
10 December 1992	Wood Green Shopping Centre, London	Two devices exploded. 11 people injured.
16 December 1992	John Lewis Department Store, Oxford Street	Device exploded. One person injured.
16 December 1992	Cavendish Square/Oxford Street	Device exploded. Three people injured.
22 December 1992	Hampstead Tube Station	Device exploded.
6 January 1993	Reject Shop, Plaza Shopping Centre, Oxford Street	Device exploded.
6 January 1993	Dillons Bookshop, Northumberland Avenue	Device exploded.
6 January 1993	C & A, Oxford Street	Device exploded.
6 January 1993	Video Shop, 60 Oxford Street	Device exploded.
28 January 1993	Harrods, Brompton Road, London	Device exploded. Two people injured.
3 February 1993	Train at Kent House Station, Kent	Device exploded.
3 February 1993	South Kensington Tube Station, London	Device exploded.
10 February 1993	Cadogan Place, London, SW1	Device exploded.
26 February 1993	Warrington, Cheshire	One person injured in shooting.
26 February 1993	Warrington, Cheshire	Device exploded.
27 February 1993	Camden High Street, London	Devices exploded. 18 people injured.

Medomsley Prison

Ms. Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the current situation of the building that formerly housed HM Prison Medomsley; and what plans his Department have for that building.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: There are no plans to use the site at Medomsley as a prison again. The property has been advertised for sale, but no acceptable offer has yet been received.

Market Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish his provisional list for market testing in respect of his responsibilities with a view to contracting out for the period September 1993 to March 1995.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have not yet decided the content of future market testing programmes.

Secure Units

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how much capital money his Department *(a)* has available and *(b)* has allocated for the provision of secure units for young people in England in 1992-93; and if he will provide a list of the establishments concerned and the sums allocated in each case;

(2) how much capital money his Department *(a)* made available and *(b)* spent on the provision of secure units for young people in England in 1991-92 and each of the previous 10 years.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health on 3 March at cols. *169-70.*

Convictions

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what proportion of crimes led to successful convictions in each of the last five years for which figures are available for each county; what was the average figure *(a)* for England, *(b)* for Wales and *(c)* the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what proportion of recorded crimes has led to successful convictions in each of the last five years for which there are figures, in each county in England and Wales; what were the average figures for England, Wales and for the United Kingdom for the same years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The information is not available. Information on recorded offences and court proceedings is compiled on different bases and a measure that combines the two therefore cannot be prepared. Figures for crimes cleared up by means of charge or summons were given in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney) on 4 February at cols. *291-92.*

Crime Statistics

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had about revising the basis on which crime statistics are collected.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* My Department is currently looking at revising the rules and instructions for the forces to follow in collecting crime statistics. As part of this process each force, as well as representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers, have been consulted. I expect a set of proposals to be submitted for my approval later this year.

Crime (Staffordshire)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what was *(a)* the number of reported thefts from motor vehicles in Staffordshire in each year since 1979 and *(b)* the percentage differences in the number of reported thefts from motor vehicles in Staffordshire between 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available;

(2) what was *(a)* the number of reported thefts of motor vehicles in Staffordshire in each year since 1979 and *(b)* the percentage difference in the number of reported thefts of motor vehicles in Staffordshire between 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available;

(3) what was *(a)* the number of reported burglaries in Staffordshire for each year since 1979 and *(b)* the percentage difference in the number of reported burglaries in Staffordshire between 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available;

(4) what was *(a)* the level of recorded crime in Staffordshire for each year since 1979 and *(b)* the percentage difference in the level of reported crime in Staffordshire between 1979 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The available information is for recorded offences. Statistics for 1979 are published in table 32 of the 1979 volume of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Statistics for 1980-91 are published annually in table 3.1 of the "Criminal Statistics, Supplementary Volume 3"—copies of these publications are available in the Library. Figures for 1992 are not yet available. Figures for percentage changes between 1979 and 1991, the latest available year, are as follows:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police—Staffordshire

Offence	*Percentage change 1991 compared with 1979*
Theft from vehicle	+248
Theft of vehicle	+223
Burglaries	+193
Total overall recorded crime	+127

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 5 March 1993

HOME DEPARTMENT

Security Firms

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will take the necessary action to require all employees of security firms *(a)* to be registered by the police authority, *(b)* to be issued with a personal number and *(c)* to be required to wear their personal identification number prominently and visually; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so. The Government's policy is to promote self-regulation in the private security industry.

Electoral Malpractice

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make a statement on the penalties for electoral malpractice;

(2) what proposals he has to increase the penalties for corrupt or illegal electoral practices;

(3) what proposals he has for the revision of the law on illegal electoral practices.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The penalties for corrupt practices, illegal practices and other offences are set out in the Representation of the People Act 1983. We have no proposals for revising the law.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for amendment of the legislation on the conduct of elections.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have set up five working groups of Home Office officials and representatives of returning officers and local authorities to consider different aspects of the electoral process. We shall consider the findings of the working groups once they have concluded their work.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for extension of the time for submission of electoral expense returns.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have no such proposals.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to investigate the value of human tissue as an alternative to both live animal experimentation and experiments with animal tissues.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office, on the advice of the Animal Procedures Committee, funds research into ways of refining, reducing and replacing the use of living animals in scientific procedures. Applications for funding are considered by the research sub-committee of the APC.

Police Interview Notes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many instances in each of the past three years criminal convictions have been referred back to the Court of Appeal following re-examination of the original police interview notes.

Mr. Jack: The re-examination of original police interview notes was a factor in the reference to the Court of Appeal of one case in 1990, four cases in 1991 and three cases in 1992.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many requests have been made to the police in each of the past three years for the disclosure of original interview notes in cases where criminal charges have been brought; in how many instances these requests have been denied; and for what reasons.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not available. Records are not held in a form which would identify such requests.

Prison Service (Supply and Transport)

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the future arrangements for the warehousing and distribution function of the prison service's supply and transport branch.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Following the market testing of the warehousing and distribution function, I approved, in July 1992, the award of a contract to a private sector company, subject inter alia to the negotiation of a satisfactory contract. It has not been possible to negotiate such a contract, and the next best bid, which is the in-house bid, now becomes the preferred bid. I have instructed officials to negotiate a service level agreement with the in-house providers. I expect the outcome of this market test to reduce the present costs of this function by about a quarter over three years.

Probation Service

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the probation service budget in England and Wales was spent on *(a)* research and information and *(b)* administration in 1981, 1991 and 1992 respectively.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 19 February 1993]:* Probation service expenditure, while broken down, is not done so in such a way as to enable this information to be given.

Probation areas, taking account of both national and local plans and priorities, make their own decisions about expenditure on research and on administration. Much valuable research work as well as essential information work is conducted within probation areas.

The number of personnel employed by probation committee in England and Wales as research and information officers and as clerical, secretarial and adminstrative staff was as follows (percentage of total staff in parentheses):

	31 December 1981	per cent.	31 December 1991[1]	per cent.	30 September 1992[1]	per cent.
Research and information officers	n/a	(n/a)	63·5	(0·4)	66·7	(0·5)
Clerical, secretarial and administrative staff	[2]3,461	(29·0)	4,378	(30·5)	4,513	(30·8)

[1]Figures are full-time equivalents.
[2] Includes 947 part-time staff.

Telephone Sex Lines

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward proposals to ban sex lines from the public telephone system.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

There is an effective system of regulatory control of these services; they are obliged to operate under a code of practice drawn up and monitored by the independent committee for the supervision of standards in telephone information services (ICSTIS). The code sets detailed conditions for the content, conditions of access and advertising of the services.

Telephone subscribers also have the opportunity to request call barring, which makes it impossible to call the services from their line. BT provides this facility free of charge.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

High Court Judges

Sir John Wheeler: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department whether additional judges will be appointed to reduce delays in the High Court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and the Lord Chief Justice have now considered the advice of the group of judges and officials chaired by Lord Justice Kennedy. This is contained in the group's report on High Court judges' work, deployment and numbers, copies of which will be made available to the Libraries of both Houses.

As a result of that advice, the Lord Chancellor and I have decided to seek parliamentary and Privy Council approval in the near future to increase the statutory maximum number of judges.

Subject to that approval, the Lord Chancellor intends as soon as possible to recommend the appointment of 10 additional High Court judges, and he has agreed with the Lord Chief Justice and the Vice-Chancellor that the additional judges will be deployed in such a way as to reduce delays and backlogs in the chancery division, the Court of Appeal criminal division, the Crown Office list, the employment appeal tribunal and the commercial court.

EDUCATION

Market Testing

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will subject the work of his Department's solicitors branch to market testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: There are no immediate plans to market test the work of the Department's legal branch.

Education Spending

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each local education authority in England and Wales for each year since 1985 *(a)* their total spending, *(b)* their spending per pupil and *(c)* their spending per pupil at nursery, primary and secondary stages of education.

Mr. Forth: The information for England for parts *(a)* and *(b)* is given in table 1, and for part *(c)* in table 2. Expenditure on schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. Figures given relate to net institutional expenditure rather than total LEA spending. The tables show spending in cash for years up to 1990-91, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available.

Table 1
Net institutional expenditure by each authority in cash terms

Local education authority	1985-86 Total expenditure £000	1985-86 Unit cost £	1986-87 Total expenditure £000	1986-87 Unit cost £	1987-88 Total expenditure £000	1987-88 Unit cost £	1989-90 Total expenditure £000	1989-90 Unit cost £	1990-91 Total expenditure £000	1990-91 Unit cost £
ILEA	482,118	1,740	528,027	1,930	569,987	2,105	589,220	2,170	—	—
City	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	404	1,950
Camden	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	39,153	2,000
Greenwich	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n.a.	n.a.
Hackney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	49,671	2,165
Hammersmith	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	30,386	2,225
Islington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	41,959	1,995
Kensington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	21,787	2,340
Lambeth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	48,757	2,020
Lewisham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	59,568	1,985
Southwark	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	57,227	2,015
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	63,056	2,140
Wandsworth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	53,440	2,085
Westminster	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	42,767	2,715

Local education authority	1985-86 Total expenditure £000	1985-86 Unit cost £	1986-87 Total expenditure £000	1986-87 Unit cost £	1987-88 Total expenditure £000	1987-88 Unit cost £	1989-90 Total expenditure £000	1989-90 Unit cost £	1990-91 Total expenditure £000	1990-91 Unit cost £
Barking	26,776	1,125	29,712	1,280	35,015	1,540	37,924	1,680	39,698	1,745
Barnet	49,015	1,230	54,540	1,385	n.a.	n.a.	63,842	1,620	65,817	1,725
Bexley	36,610	1,110	40,541	1,255	44,502	1,405	46,504	1,490	49,529	1,575
Brent	53,388	1,565	59,966	1,785	67,385	2,070	53,184	1,700	54,722	1,760
Bromley	42,833	1,135	45,824	1,255	53,732	1,520	54,615	1,585	58,149	1,710
Croydon	51,199	1,165	56,011	1,300	62,419	1,490	60,556	1,495	65,688	1,630
Ealing	49,429	1,340	54,295	1,470	n.a.	n.a.	63,779	1,740	72,405	1,950
Enfield	41,364	1,070	45,570	1,195	51,306	1,365	54,546	1,475	61,690	1,650
Haringey	43,727	1,665	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	53,050	2,085
Harrow	33,323	1,265	37,200	1,425	40,580	1,595	37,270	1,455	43,893	1,685
Havering	41,578	1,115	45,958	1,260	49,259	1,375	53,471	1,540	55,265	1,605
Hillingdon	37,566	1,150	41,376	1,305	44,715	1,440	49,292	1,600	54,172	1,785
Hounslow	36,381	1,195	41,314	1,370	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	51,504	1,695
Kingston upon Thames	20,210	1,155	22,899	1,335	26,008	1,550	26,848	1,635	28,855	1,740
Merton	23,494	1,085	27,074	1,290	28,870	1,415	32,566	1,665	36,756	1,855
Newham	48,416	1,380	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	60,527	1,775	61,648	1,750
Redbridge	34,910	1,160	40,634	1,360	43,608	1,470	43,559	1,460	49,743	1,625
Richmond upon Thames	18,339	1,160	20,502	1,290	23,866	1,495	24,949	1,545	27,374	1,665
Sutton	23,768	1,075	26,847	1,220	29,949	1,375	31,991	1,470	34,903	1,640
Waltham Forest	41,145	1,315	47,816	1,570	53,595	1,800	53,909	1,855	57,505	1,940
Birmingham	165,104	965	183,258	1,085	202,882	1,215	229,519	1,385	255,623	1,550
Coventry	53,838	1,080	58,421	1,205	63,183	1,350	72,625	1,585	74,798	1,625
Dudley	45,203	955	51,052	1,105	56,396	1,250	61,414	1,395	66,482	1,530
Sandwell	55,117	1,080	60,145	1,220	65,541	1,360	75,387	1,610	78,611	1,670
Solihull	33,634	970	37,277	1,100	40,547	1,230	46,411	1,455	47,630	1,495
Walsall	50,264	1,040	57,801	1,235	62,965	1,380	69,559	1,565	78,226	1,755
Wolverhampton	47,754	1,115	51,236	1,230	n.a.	n.a.	61,207	1,585	60,864	1,600
Knowsley	33,677	1,170	37,470	1,350	40,288	1,505	40,276	1,550	42,469	1,640
Liverpool	87,258	1,090	96,249	1,240	106,700	1,405	116,414	1,550	122,992	1,645
St. Helens	33,622	1,025	37,290	1,180	39,794	1,305	44,515	1,515	43,400	1,485
Sefton	44,552	950	48,301	1,050	53,768	1,200	60,391	1,365	66,145	1,495
Wirral	50,343	950	55,804	1,075	61,991	1,220	77,424	1,535	81,495	1,605
Bolton	42,845	945	46,272	1,040	51,073	1,170	59,775	1,400	62,904	1,490
Bury	29,184	1,070	31,907	1,190	36,808	1,420	37,444	1,455	36,181	1,395
Manchester	84,857	1,210	94,449	1,375	97,711	1,445	n.a.	n.a.	105,937	1,555
Oldham	37,578	980	40,900	1,080	46,381	1,240	55,698	1,480	60,531	1,585
Rochdale	39,018	1,070	42,330	1,190	46,030	1,320	52,629	1,540	52,044	1,545
Salford	39,847	1,025	42,986	1,140	n.a.	n.a.	54,788	1,555	55,280	1,560
Stockport	43,162	955	46,910	1,065	53,082	1,230	59,360	1,420	65,138	1,555
Tameside	36,895	1,020	40,778	1,150	44,788	1,280	50,316	1,450	52,880	1,545
Trafford	32,596	1,085	34,473	1,180	41,355	1,460	39,936	1,440	42,322	1,480
Wigan	57,426	1,060	62,992	1,195	68,937	1,345	73,622	1,480	75,447	1,530
Barnsley	38,719	1,050	41,894	1,175	44,561	1,295	47,037	1,420	46,181	1,425
Doncaster	51,584	1,040	55,982	1,155	60,802	1,285	70,245	1,495	68,574	1,445
Rotherham	42,493	955	48,080	1,110	53,063	1,260	61,045	1,490	63,539	1,500
Sheffield	88,573	1,140	95,472	1,285	n/a	n/a	103,507	1,545	108,538	1,625
Bradford	85,613	1,050	93,442	1,155	105,138	1,315	117,446	1,470	125,563	1,560
Calderdale	32,781	1,000	38,840	1,215	38,312	1,220	42,109	1,355	51,005	1,645
Kirklees	62,214	960	68,247	1,085	74,720	1,220	86,726	1,455	88,646	1,510
Leeds	108,699	990	121,473	1,135	133,273	1,280	151,542	1,485	164,826	1,620
Wakefield	51,312	1,015	56,103	1,145	62,253	1,300	n/a	n/a	73,424	1,560
Gateshead	33,484	1,065	37,012	1,205	39,670	1,335	43,298	1,495	46,716	1,620
Newcastle upon Tyne	46,879	1,185	51,603	1,325	57,085	1,480	61,188	1,605	63,867	1,665
North Tyneside	35,912	1,165	39,717	1,305	43,111	1,445	n/a	n/a	48,216	1,620
South Tyneside	26,597	1,070	29,166	1,200	31,160	1,310	36,255	1,545	37,239	1,570
Sunderland	50,284	970	53,995	1,065	59,249	1,200	67,901	1,425	70,108	1,480
Avon	135,806	1,000	147,269	1,105	159,839	1,220	185,292	1,455	191,994	1,495
Bedfordshire	88,611	1,055	95,169	1,140	109,451	1,330	125,627	1,545	129,417	1,590
Berkshire	109,356	1,015	118,121	1,105	n/a	n/a	142,077	1,380	157,303	1,530
Buckinghamshire	96,537	1,010	109,085	1,155	121,396	1,305	129,622	1,420	138,582	1,530
Cambridgeshire	91,610	955	102,699	1,075	113,646	1,190	131,166	1,335	142,488	1,475
Cheshire	150,018	985	162,800	1,070	180,605	1,195	201,300	1,335	218,270	1,470
Cleveland	99,190	990	110,174	1,120	118,866	1,230	139,878	1,465	149,885	1,535
Cornwall	62,409	920	69,369	1,030	77,917	1,165	90,492	1,355	96,044	1,445
Cumbria	76,705	1,005	87,501	1,170	97,354	1,325	109,071	1,515	114,803	1,595
Derbyshire	143,594	995	160,141	1,130	178,059	1,285	210,905	1,545	218,707	1,630
Devon	126,373	960	139,303	1,065	154,563	1,190	175,376	1,355	197,169	1,520
Dorset	77,445	965	86,996	1,095	95,122	1,195	108,507	1,370	118,208	1,500
Durham	96,436	995	104,931	1,105	115,206	1,245	130,096	1,430	139,024	1,530
East Sussex	77,377	960	85,933	1,070	95,653	1,205	110,587	1,400	119,707	1,500
Essex	226,340	975	249,563	1,090	276,336	1,230	313,949	1,445	319,631	1,480
Gloucestershire	72,694	955	81,405	1,085	93,346	1,260	102,195	1,400	104,605	1,470
Hampshire	201,084	925	224,402	1,050	250,945	1,195	287,806	1,395	301,984	1,460
Herefordshire	96,338	985	104,815	1,085	116,119	1,220	130,655	1,395	142,325	1,520

Local education authority	1985-86 Total expenditure £000	1985-86 Unit cost £	1986-87 Total expenditure £000	1986-87 Unit cost £	1987-88 Total expenditure £000	1987-88 Unit cost £	1989-90 Total expenditure £000	1989-90 Unit cost £	1990-91 Total expenditure £000	1990-91 Unit cost £
Hertfordshire	157,356	1,030	173,344	1,155	187,505	1,275	220,368	1,545	234,711	1,665
Humberside	148,186	1,040	159,796	1,140	173,137	1,265	200,568	1,480	204,631	1,510
Isle of Wight	16,966	995	18,500	1,100	20,845	1,250	23,767	1,395	25,595	1,505
Kent	206,786	915	225,181	1,015	247,234	1,135	274,142	1,275	296,367	1,385
Lancashire	204,696	945	223,480	1,050	251,072	1,200	287,430	1,380	311,867	1,510
Leicestershire	145,523	1,045	161,113	1,175	175,441	1,290	202,552	1,500	219,144	1,620
Lincolnshire	84,034	985	92,651	1,105	98,856	1,195	109,036	1,340	113,022	1,420
Norfolk	102,002	975	112,461	1,085	130,457	1,280	142,067	1,425	150,766	1,520
North Yorkshire	101,974	1,015	111,035	1,115	119,621	1,220	135,552	1,390	150,114	1,545
Northamptonshire	90,857	970	100,242	1,075	108,385	1,170	126,367	1,375	130,725	1,435
Northumberland	49,173	1,005	54,566	1,130	60,467	1,270	68,737	1,450	75,540	1,585
Nottinghamshire	165,415	1,065	178,866	1,180	193,205	1,310	226,020	1,560	246,811	1,700
Oxfordshire	80,132	1,060	88,075	1,190	98,054	1,350	106,067	1,490	123,693	1,740
Shropshire	63,439	1,005	70,550	1,135	79,220	1,295	88,530	1,470	97,605	1,635
Somerset	60,863	955	67,956	1,075	76,163	1,220	86,708	1,420	91,002	1,485
Staffordshire	168,484	1,015	180,305	1,115	197,123	1,245	223,459	1,435	238,846	1,525
Suffolk	88,665	965	96,355	1,065	104,760	1,175	130,200	1,495	134,806	1,550
Surrey	124,655	985	136,052	1,100	150,040	1,240	161,194	1,340	178,779	1,550
Warwickshire	71,032	950	76,996	1,055	84,769	1,185	94,908	1,370	100,175	1,455
West Sussex	84,553	920	95,115	1,045	105,155	1,170	124,107	1,410	133,638	1,505
Wiltshire	76,968	955	86,049	1,090	93,402	1,200	105,013	1,375	114,914	1,505

Table 2
Net institutional expenditure per pupil (cash terms)

Local education authority	1985-86 NUR	1985-86 PRI	1985-86 SEC	1986-87 NUR	1986-87 PRI	1986-87 SEC	1987-88 N/P	1987-88 SEC	1988-89 N/P	1988-89 SEC	1989-90 N/P	1989-90 SEC	1990-91 N/P	1990-91 SEC
ILEA	2,505	1,315	2,085	2,455	1,460	2,345	1,585	2,610	1,605	2,505	1,835	2,725	—	—
City	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,950	0
Camden	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,710	2,290
Greenwich	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	n/a	n/a
Hackney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,900	2,710
Hammersmith	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,970	2,665
Islington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,765	2,640
Kensington	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,060	2,905
Lambeth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,840	2,585
Lewisham	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,715	2,430
Southwark	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,850	2,350
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,940	2,490
Wandsworth	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,820	2,520
Westminster	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,310	3,220
Barking	n/a	915	1,260	n/a	1,010	1,470	1,155	1,745	1,255	1,970	1,360	2,200	1,420	2,270
Barnet	1,200	930	1,330	1,275	1,060	1,510	1,195	1,675	1,250	1,820	1,370	1,925	1,495	2,040
Bexley	1,015	815	1,195	1,250	915	1,370	1,030	1,530	1,100	1,685	1,215	1,820	1,260	1,965
Brent	2,145	1,025	1,590	2,220	1,105	1,805	1,305	2,195	1,375	2,305	1,425	2,225	1,550	2,915
Bromley	n/a	855	1,255	n/a	925	1,420	1,070	1,645	1,165	1,770	1,290	1,955	1,375	2,150
Croydon	1,165	865	1,355	1,340	935	1,535	1,040	1,825	1,180	2,040	1,200	1,935	1,380	2,015
Ealing	1,580	1,050	1,460	1,720	1,135	1,650	n/a	n/a	1,385	2,145	1,485	2,345	1,690	2,575
Enfield	n/a	775	1,245	n/a	890	1,380	1,005	1,580	1,110	1,715	1,220	1,815	1,385	2,015
Haringey	910	1,160	1,710	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,840	2,590
Harrow	n/a	875	1,340	n/a	1,020	1,600	1,070	1,775	1,115	1,740	1,230	1,975	1,435	2,270
Havering	n/a	825	1,325	n/a	905	1,510	1,005	1,670	1,095	1,860	1,155	1,990	1,240	2,035
Hillingdon	945	895	1,315	1,375	1,000	1,520	1,075	1,675	1,195	1,870	1,305	2,005	1,465	2,250
Hounslow	n/a	955	1,290	n/a	1,065	1,505	1,175	1,675	1,270	1,895	n/a	n/a	1,440	2,060
Kingston upon Thames	1,270	825	1,325	1,385	915	1,530	1,055	1,720	1,175	1,905	1,265	2,120	1,400	2,195
Merton	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,835	950	1,325	1,020	1,470	1,210	1,660	1,345	1,925	1,755	1,990
Newham	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,205	1,880	1,360	2,140	1,445	2,310	1,415	2,330
Redbridge	n/a	835	1,290	n/a	935	1,465	990	1,600	1,070	1,735	1,150	1,855	1,290	2,065
Richmond upon Thames	1,215	900	1,200	1,250	1,000	1,330	1,075	1,475	1,180	1,645	1,375	1,790	1,470	1,935
Sutton	1,235	750	1,135	1,410	855	1,300	980	1,420	1,090	1,630	1,215	1,750	1,320	2,035
Waltham Forest	1,590	980	1,540	1,600	1,095	1,915	1,235	2,345	1,250	2,435	1,430	2,490	1,510	2,600
Birmingham	1,225	745	1,175	1,175	835	1,345	940	1,490	1,040	1,640	1,130	1,800	1,265	2,050
Coventry	730	850	1,310	1,225	910	1,485	990	1,705	1,065	1,940	1,195	2,180	1,220	2,265
Dudley	1,520	735	1,125	1,850	830	1,350	915	1,570	1,020	1,840	1,085	1,915	1,225	2,085
Sandwell	875	875	1,230	1,270	960	1,410	1,055	1,630	1,175	1,885	1,275	2,120	1,325	2,200
Solihull	n/a	755	1,115	n/a	845	1,280	925	1,450	1,040	1,650	1,160	1,835	1,180	1,915
Walsall	1,065	830	1,185	1,235	970	1,430	1,080	1,645	1,200	1,885	1,255	1,995	1,460	2,185
Wolverhampton	920	920	1,225	1,065	985	1,395	1,070	1,575	1,190	1,745	1,320	1,970	1,320	2,035
Knowsley	n/a	845	1,320	n/a	960	1,515	1,050	1,735	1,165	1,990	1,235	2,105	1,340	2,210
Liverpool	1,350	875	1,250	1,440	980	1,445	1,105	1,730	1,150	1,905	1,225	2,060	1,285	2,250
St. Helens	1,385	770	1,150	1,510	860	1,340	965	1,505	1,050	1,710	1,170	1,965	1,155	1,920
Sefton	1,120	740	1,125	1,220	800	1,275	930	1,460	1,015	1,600	1,110	1,715	1,200	1,900

Local education authority	1985-86			1986-87			1987-88		1988-89		1989-90		1990-91	
	NUR	PRI	SEC	NUR	PRI	SEC	N/P	SEC	N/P	SEC	N/P	SEC	N/P	SEC
Wirral	1,535	720	1,125	1,795	815	1,280	920	1,480	1,070	1,750	1,225	1,970	1,275	2,080
Bolton	1,090	720	1,115	1,220	780	1,230	890	1,425	1,015	1,635	1,130	1,795	1,195	1,950
Bury	1,270	715	1,175	1,315	795	1,340	1,045	1,515	1,080	1,730	1,190	1,860	1,165	1,755
Manchester	1,665	905	1,425	1,990	1,020	1,660	1,095	1,785	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,285	2,060
Oldham	n/a	815	1,095	n/a	870	1,255	1,005	1,395	1,125	1,590	1,295	1,760	1,360	1,920
Rochdale	1,280	795	1,275	1,375	850	1,460	940	1,650	990	1,695	1,170	2,050	1,185	2,165
Salford	1,350	790	1,200	1,555	840	1,385	985	1,625	1,085	1,860	1,200	2,140	1,230	2,145
Stockport	1,215	740	1,115	1,265	805	1,270	935	1,500	1,035	1,730	1,095	1,860	1,230	2,015
Tameside	1,500	815	1,160	1,735	910	1,325	995	1,525	1,115	1,660	1,235	1,770	1,300	1,940
Trafford	n/a	735	1,140	n/a	855	1,315	965	1,525	1,050	1,710	1,130	1,920	1,145	2,030
Wigan	695	785	1,230	1,295	860	1,460	955	1,675	1,025	1,850	1,090	2,000	1,135	2,070
Barnsley	1,330	865	1,165	1,285	925	1,325	985	1,470	1,065	1,645	1,145	1,795	1,210	1,770
Doncaster	n/a	870	1,145	n/a	980	1,325	1,045	1,500	1,175	1,655	1,255	1,805	1,205	1,765
Rotherham	1,040	800	1,070	1,115	890	1,230	1,050	1,440	1,125	1,635	1,245	1,810	1,285	1,910
Sheffield	1,520	980	1,260	1,645	1,060	1,490	n/a	n/a	1,230	1,810	1,315	1,920	1,365	2,085
Bradford	1,585	850	1,085	1,730	945	1,235	1,060	1,410	1,160	1,605	1,275	1,635	1,410	1,685
Calderdale	1,265	800	1,110	1,420	895	1,330	950	1,440	1,145	1,665	1,140	1,665	1,395	2,010
Kirklees	1,020	785	1,055	1,225	875	1,250	985	1,415	1,110	1,620	1,205	1,765	1,250	1,860
Leeds	1,085	795	1,060	1,270	905	1,230	1,030	1,370	1,155	1,545	1,255	1,715	1,375	1,860
Wakefield	1,540	875	1,090	1,450	955	1,290	1,070	1,495	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Gateshead	1,475	900	1,185	1,655	980	1,360	1,080	1,560	1,180	1,770	1,245	1,865	1,340	2,030
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,325	930	1,345	1,615	1,020	1,530	1,140	1,725	1,225	1,870	1,320	1,980	1,475	1,925
North Tyneside	1,110	900	1,295	1,205	995	1,455	1,090	1,660	1,145	1,785	n/a	n/a	1,320	1,930
South Tyneside	1,245	865	1,255	1,265	965	1,430	1,060	1,585	1,150	1,825	1,255	2,010	1,265	2,085
Sunderland	1,235	775	1,150	1,335	855	1,305	925	1,505	1,005	1,670	1,155	1,845	1,240	1,865
Avon	1,170	780	1,160	1,285	850	1,310	975	1,435	1,050	1,630	1,195	1,795	1,250	1,860
Bedfordshire	1,195	815	1,140	1,195	875	1,250	1,030	1,455	1,115	1,635	1,240	1,815	1,325	1,830
Berkshire	1,275	790	1,150	1,395	845	1,280	n/a	n/a	1,030	1,570	1,105	1,735	1,265	1,875
Buckinghamshire	1,090	755	1,140	1,270	845	1,320	970	1,505	1,065	1,715	1,170	1,850	1,285	1,990
Cambridgeshire	1,300	730	1,040	1,430	815	1,205	910	1,315	1,005	1,480	1,115	1,640	1,215	1,845
Cheshire	1,100	760	1,090	1,220	810	1,235	900	1,390	960	1,545	1,050	1,715	1,180	1,865
Cleveland	1,070	795	1,175	1,115	890	1,355	970	1,545	1,075	1,770	1,150	1,915	1,210	2,035
Cornwall	1,000	710	1,045	1,290	795	1,175	900	1,345	1,010	1,525	1,095	1,690	1,170	1,810
Cumbria	1,340	775	1,095	1,490	915	1,315	1,060	1,510	1,140	1,685	1,265	1,845	1,305	1,990
Derbyshire	1,225	780	1,125	1,410	875	1,305	990	1,530	1,080	1,755	1,235	1,975	1,335	2,060
Devon	940	725	1,095	1,020	800	1,225	905	1,380	975	1,535	1,095	1,705	1,255	1,890
Dorset	n/a	770	1,030	n/a	870	1,190	950	1,320	1,020	1,490	1,120	1,630	1,245	1,770
Durham	1,280	825	1,095	1,460	920	1,225	1,050	1,405	1,130	1,575	1,225	1,735	1,320	1,845
East Sussex	1,190	760	1,085	1,355	825	1,235	930	1,385	1,025	1,565	1,125	1,765	1,215	1,890
Essex	1,215	730	1,115	1,360	820	1,255	920	1,420	1,050	1,635	1,150	1,800	1,180	1,850
Gloucestershire	n/a	740	1,095	n/a	835	1,260	935	1,385	1,010	1,545	1,140	1,735	1,175	1,875
Hampshire	1,070	730	1,065	1,220	825	1,220	950	1,405	1,040	1,580	1,125	1,790	1,190	1,880
Herefordshire	n/a	745	1,060	n/a	815	1,180	930	1,330	1,000	1,440	1,145	1,635	1,280	1,760
Hertfordshire	1,335	780	1,180	1,485	870	1,350	975	1,490	1,130	1,740	1,245	1,900	1,335	2,065
Humberside	1,080	865	1,125	2,520	915	1,270	995	1,460	1,155	1,690	1,265	1,765	1,240	1,870
Isle of Wight	n/a	730	1,030	n/a	785	1,150	935	1,350	1,055	1,495	1,120	1,575	1,210	1,710
Kent	1,400	695	1,015	1,575	760	1,145	855	1,290	935	1,475	1,030	1,565	1,085	1,750
Lancashire	1,275	720	1,095	1,405	780	1,255	890	1,450	985	1,620	1,090	1,810	1,265	1,885
Leicestershire	1,430	805	1,205	1,270	885	1,390	960	1,565	1,085	1,770	1,180	1,900	1,275	2,065
Lincolnshire	1,070	720	1,025	1,205	795	1,185	900	1,280	1,005	1,505	1,110	1,630	1,150	1,800
Norfolk	1,225	760	1,095	1,235	850	1,230	955	1,385	1,070	1,585	1,160	1,810	1,255	1,930
North Yorkshire	1,255	775	1,110	1,305	850	1,240	915	1,375	1,030	1,595	1,100	1,760	1,230	1,945
Northamptonshire	1,130	740	1,110	1,280	815	1,250	885	1,375	1,005	1,545	1,095	1,685	1,170	1,730
Northumberland	1,995	755	1,075	2,420	840	1,230	945	1,390	1,090	1,630	1,175	1,645	1,300	1,785
Nottinghamshire	1,400	840	1,220	1,505	935	1,365	1,020	1,540	1,115	1,745	1,255	1,960	1,355	2,170
Oxfordshire	1,060	815	1,190	1,290	905	1,350	1,035	1,560	1,125	1,660	1,205	1,810	1,470	2,055
Shropshire	1,265	765	1,125	1,410	850	1,285	945	1,470	1,075	1,690	1,160	1,855	1,310	2,055
Somerset	n/a	700	1,040	n/a	780	1,195	900	1,355	1,025	1,570	1,145	1,745	1,220	1,815
Staffordshire	1,060	815	1,125	1,165	880	1,255	980	1,420	1,050	1,610	1,155	1,790	1,260	1,875
Suffolk	980	770	1,030	1,165	830	1,165	910	1,305	1,020	1,485	1,120	1,820	1,175	1,875
Surrey	1,365	730	1,110	1,420	820	1,260	905	1,415	1,050	1,635	1,140	1,675	1,260	2,045
Warwickshire	1,145	765	1,085	1,240	845	1,220	940	1,400	1,025	1,635	1,140	1,675	1,220	1,875
West Sussex	1,015	705	1,060	990	785	1,220	890	1,360	1,005	1,530	1,145	1,745	1,250	1,830
Wiltshire	n/a	745	1,055	n/a	850	1,230	940	1,350	1,045	1,555	1,125	1,700	1,270	1,820

Notes:

1. Net institutional expenditure covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the costs of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure. For 1990-91, figures include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management of schools schemes.
2. *Table 1* omits data for 1988-89 because comparable figures are not available.
3. Figures in both tables up to 1989-90 are from the Cipfa publication "Education Statistics Actuals incorporating The Handbook of Unit Cost" for each relevant year. For 1990-91, figures are derived directly from local education authorities' returns of their spending to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department for Education.
4. Spending on nursery and primary schools was not collected separately for years after 1986-87.

TRANSPORT

Road Schemes

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those road schemes currently proposed by his Department which will have effects on *(a)* sites of special interest, *(b)* areas of outstanding natural beauty and *(c)* national parks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We place great emphasis on environmental considerations when assessing road proposals. Wherever possible roads are kept away from protected areas such as sites of special scientific interest, areas of outstanding natural beauty, and national parks. We consult statutory environmental organisations from the earliest stages of route development to ensure that impacts on protected areas, where unavoidable, are limited, and appropriate mitigation measures put in place, including the creation of new habitats.

The following lists are confined to schemes for which preferred routes have been announced, but have not reached construction stage.

Proposals for road schemes which would affect sites of special scientific interest are:

M1-A1 link (Lofthouse—Bramham)
M6 junctions 30—32
M25 junctions 12—15 (link roads)
M66 Denton—Middleton
A1 (M) Redhouse—Ferrybridge
A1 (M)Ferrybridge—Hook Moor
A2/A282 Dartford improvements
A3 Hindhead improvements (preferred route under review)
A5 Dunstable bypass
A6 Clapham bypass
A10 Wadesmill and Colliers End bypass
A10/A47 A134 to Hardwick roundabout
A13 Thames avenue—Wennington
A17 Leadenham—Sleaford improvements
A30 Shallowater hill improvement
A30/A39 Indian Queens/Fraddon bypass
A34 Newbury bypass
A35 Chideock—Morcombelake bypass
A43 Geddington bypass
A45 Stonebridge grade separated junction
A49/A465 Hereford bypass
A64 York bypass—Malton bypass
A65 Hellifield—Long Preston bypass
A120 Stansted—Braintree
A259 Bexhill and Hastings western bypass
A259 Dymchurch—M20 (junction 11)
A259 Pevensey—Bexhill improvement
A259 Rye bypass
A303 Wylye—Stockton Wood
A406 East London river crossing
A585 Norcross—M55 link
A650 Airedale Route (Crossflatts—Cottingley Bar)
Birmingham northern relief road
Kidderminster, Blakedown and Hagley bypass

Proposals for road schemes which would affect areas of outstanding natural beauty are:

M20 junctions 3-5
M25 junctions 12-15 (link roads)
M25 widening junctions 16-23
A3 Hindhead improvement (preferred route under review)
A4/A46 Batheaston/Swainswick bypass
A5 Dunstable bypass
A16 Fotherby bypass
A16 Partney bypass
A21 Lamberhurst bypass
A21 Tonbridge-Pembury
A21 Kippings Cross-Lamberhurst
A23 Handcross-Warninglid improvement
A27 Patching junction
A27 Worthing-Lancing improvement
A30 Marsh-Honiton
A30 Shallowater hill improvement
A34 Newbury bypass
A34 (A34/M4 junction 13) improvement
A35 Chideock-Morecombelake bypass
A36 Codford-Heytesbury
A39 Allins-South Penlean
A40 Witney bypass-Sturt Farm improvement
A41 Aston Clinton bypass
A46 Upper Swainswick-Pennsylvania
A64 York bypass-Malton bypass
A65 Ilkley bypass
A66 Stainmore-Banksgate
A259 Winchelsea bypass
A259 Dymchurch-M20 (junction 11)
A259 Hastings eastern bypass
A303 Ilminster-Marsh
A303 Wylye-Stockton Wood
A417 Brockworth bypass
A417 Cirencester-Stratton bypass
A417 North of Stratton-Nettleton

Proposals for road schemes which would affect national parks are:

A65 Gargrave bypass
A65 Hellifield-Long Preston bypass
A616/A628 Salters Brook-Stockbridge

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate his Department has made of the increase of carbon dioxide emissions from transport from 1985 to 2000; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In 1985 the transport sector emitted 26 million tonnes of carbon (calculated by source). It is estimated that in 2000 transport emissions will be between 38 and 40 million tonnes of carbon (Source: Warren Spring laboratory).

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of *(a)* energy consumption and *(b)* carbon dioxide emissions transport was responsible for in the most recent period for which an estimate has been made; what percentage of this was attributed to roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In 1991 the transport sector accounted for 22 per cent. of total inland energy consumption of primary fuels and equivalents (Source: Department of Trade and Industry). Road transport accounted for 80 per cent. of the sector's energy consumption. In 1990 24 per cent. of carbon dioxide emissions, by end user, were allocated to the transport sector, of which 90 per cent. came from road transport (Source: Warren Spring laboratory).

Railways (Crimes)

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the statistics for crimes of all kinds committed against passengers on all British Rail lines over the past five years.

Mr. Roger Freeman: Figures for crimes committed against passengers are not readily available prior to 1991. However, figures for 1991 and 1992 are in the following table:

	1991	*1992*
Robberies	591	760
Rape and indecent assaults	195	217
Assaults	615	664

	1991	*1992*
Others (non-violent)	28,996	29,432
Total	30,397	31,073

Road Safety

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to issue guidelines to local authorities concerning the use of red light and speed cameras for deterrent and road safety purposes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Advice was issued to local authorities in England and Wales in March 1992 (Department of Transport Circular Roads 1/92, Welsh Office Circular 22/92) and to local authorities in Scotland in June 1992 (SOID Circular 7/92).

Rail Freight

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what comparative statistics he has on the use of rail to transport freight in each country in the EC; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Table 8.10 of Transport Statistics Great Britain 1992 shows freight moved by national vehicles on national territory in 1980 and 1990. Copies are available in the Library.

An important reason for national differences is economic geography. The long coastlines of the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain favour coastal shipping, while the topography of the Netherlands favours inland waterways. France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany cover a land mass favourable to rail for bulk transport, and with long hauls giving some advantage to rail over road.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

War Crimes Act 1991

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the operation so far of the War Crimes Act 1991.

The Solicitor-General: Investigations continue in the manner set out in the answer given by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General to the hon. Member on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *14*. The number of cases under investigation in England and Wales is 90. The prosecuting authorities will consider each case at the conclusion of the relevant police investigation. I cannot predict whether and when any prosecutions will be initiated.

EC (Acquired Rights Directive)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions the Government have appeared before the European Court of Justice in cases concerning the European Community acquired rights directive (77/187); and what was the total cost to the Government of such representations.

The Attorney-General *[holding answer 16 February 1993]:* The United Kingdom has intervened on five occasions before the European Court of Justice in cases concerning the acquired rights directive, 77/187, the first of which was in 1983. The cost of time spent by officials in preparing and in some cases presenting the cases cannot be calculated retrospectively. Some information is however still available about disbursements and I will write to the hon. Member with details about this once the records have been checked.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Irish Language

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to embrace cultural diversity within the Province and to support the Irish language in the context of European Community policy on lesser-spoken languages; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is the Government's policy to promote cultural diversity—for example, through the cultural traditions group funded under the cultural traditional programme—and I hope that it will soon be possible to hold further talks to take forward the preliminary consideration given to this matter last year. As for support for the Irish language, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answers I gave to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) on 16 November 1992, *Official Report*, column *9*,and on 17 November 1992 *Official Report*, columns *149-52*, where information was provided on Government support for the Irish language. The Government are still considering whether to sign the Council of Europe convention on regional and minority languages.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Irleland what is his estimate of the number of people in Northern Ireland who use Irish as a medium of communication in their daily life.

Mr. Hanley: Up-to-date information on the number of people in Northern Ireland using Irish as a medium of communication in their daily lives is not available. The 1991 census of population, which contains the most recent information on knowledge of the language, indicates that 131,974 persons aged three or over had some ability. The 1987 continuous household survey indicated that, of those with some knowledge of the language, 1 per cent. of those aged 16 to 69 and five per cent. of those aged three to 15 years used it in the home on a daily basis.

North-South Co-operation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to seek the removal of all barriers occasioned by the border to the closest possible relationships in Ireland between north and south, through people-to-people contacts and co-operation across a range of policy areas, as part of a wider framework of European Community inter-regional co-operation involving the EC and the new Committee of the Regions; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is already my policy to promote cross-border co-operation at individual level, through bi-lateral contact, and in the wider European Community framework.

I have welcomed in particular the removal of barriers to trade with the creation of the single market and will continue to look for opportunities for the promotion of educational exchanges, cultural contacts, community development projects, tourism, export promotion and measures to improve the infrastructure of Northern Ireland's economy. These were issues addressed during last year's talks which focused on relationships among the people of the island of Ireland, as well as those within Northern Ireland and between the two Governments. I hope that it will soon be possible to hold further talks to continue to address these issues as part of a comprehensive agenda.

Educational Administration

Mr. Stott: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy that any change in structure of educational administration in Northern Ireland, as advanced in the consultative document, will not result in any real cut in the appropriation of funds to the Department of Education, after the implementation of a revised administrative structure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: While the stated objectives of the consultative document include achieving greater effectiveness, efficiency and economy so as to improve education services in Northern Ireland, the extent of any net savings cannot be evaluated until the Government have analysed the cost of setting up and operating any new structures. At that stage, the overall expenditure needs of the Department of Education, like those of other Northern Ireland Departments, will have to be decided in the public expenditure survey, in the usual way.

Assembly

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will establish an inquiry into the case for a Northern Ireland assembly elected by proportional representation, with a high degree of autonomy within the United Kingdom, with the ability to represent Northern Ireland directly to the institutions of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I continue to urge the need for further political dialogue on such issues. The talks which took place last year identified common themes and principles which should underlie any new political institutions in Northern Ireland and examined possible structures which might reflect these. Preliminary consideration was also given to the possible future relationship between any new political institutions in Northern Ireland and the institutions of the European Community. I hope it will be possible to agree a basis for fresh talks which could make further progress towards agreement on these and other relevant issues.

Police Interview Notes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in how many instances in each of the past three years criminal convictions have been referred back to the Court of Appeal following re-examination of the original police interview notes.

Mr. Mates: One case, involving four men, in 1991.

Vehicle Registration

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on vehicle registration for Derry city outlining the reasons for avoiding alphabetical sequence by progressing from EUI to GUI registration.

Mr. Atkins: In common with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in Great Britain, the Department of Environment (NI) vets vehicle registration marks to avoid the issue of any combination of letters, or letters and numbers, which might cause, or be thought to cause, offence. FUI was regarded as such a combination.

PRIME MINISTER

Civil List

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if he will arrange for those payments to members of the royal family made through the civil list to be subject to audit and scrutiny by the National Audit Office.

The Prime Minister: The payments of the annuities to members of the royal family from the Consolidated Fund are already subject to National Audit Office audit. Her Majesty the Queen has agreed to refund those costs, except for the annuities for the Queen Mother and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Market Testing

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what is the highest rank in the civil service or Government to which market testing will be applied.

Prime Minister: Market testing could apply in principle to any suitable activity and would, therefore, affect staff at any grade in market tested areas.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what representations he received on nuclear testing during his recent visit to Washington.

The Prime Minister: During my visit I received one letter about nuclear testing from a United States congressman.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *671*, if he will list the titles of the papers his office has made available to the Scott inquiry.

The Prime Minister: No. It would not be appropriate to do so.

WALES

Tourism

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what is the latest figure for people employed in the tourist industry in Wales; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many people were employed in the tourist industry in Wales in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: In September 1989 there were 71,100 people directly employed in tourism in Wales. More recent data are not available. The definition of these industries is consistent with that of table 8.1 in the *Employment Gazette* a monthly periodical produced by the Employment Department, which is available in the Library of the House.

Community Charge

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many summonses have been served concerning moneys outstanding on the community charge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The total number of summonses issued by Welsh courts in respect of arrears in payment of community charge for the period 1 April 1990 to 31 December 1992 was 1,179,064. Some people may have been summonsed in more than one financial year.

Prompt action by local authorities in the use of enforcement procedures has had the desired effect. Welsh local authorities anticipate that they will collect more than they budgeted to collect when the 1992-93 charges were set. This surplus will be passed on in council tax bills for 1993-94, giving an average reduction for a band C property of £15.

Business Rate

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many business rate appeals are currently outstanding; how many non-domestic rating appeals were originally received following the revaluation on 1 April 1990; and how many of these original appeals have since been resolved.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Following the revaluation of non-domestic property on 1 April 1990, 26,710 appeals were received. Around 18,000 of these have been resolved. The total number of appeals outstanding at 31 January 1993 was 18,290.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of bankruptcies in each year since 1987 *(a)* in Wales and *(b)* in England.

Mr. David Hunt: Official estimates of bankruptcy orders are compiled for Wales and England together and are not separately available for Wales.

Estimates of bankruptcy orders for England and Wales for each of the years in question are as follows:

	Bankruptcy Orders
1987	6,994
1988	7,717
1989	8,138
1990	12,058
1991	22,632
1992	32,106

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government remain committed to the wider application of compulsory competitive tendering to local government. This will secure greater efficiency and a higher standard of service to local tax payers.

DSS (Transfer of Funds)

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a figure for the cumulative transfer of funds from the Department of Social Services to his Department.

Mr. David Hunt: The amount transferred from the Department of Social Security to local authorities and the NHS in Wales is as follows:

	Cumulative Amount
	£ million
1993-94	27.8
1994-95	72.9
1995-96	108.6

School Populations

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the average size of each school population for which each education authority in Wales is responsible.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the average size of schools maintained by each local education authority at January 1992 is given in the table.

	Primary[1]	*Secondary*[2]
Clwyd	164	811
Dyfed	103	775
Gwent	205	891
Gwynedd	100	667
Mid Glamorgan	184	876
Powys	96	600
South Glamorgan	244	983
West Glamorgan	227	847
Wales	164	827

[1] Includes full and part-time pupils.
[2] Excludes grant-maintained schools.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many professional assessors there are in the county of Powys who are capable of assessing the needs of children and young people who are prima facie in need of special education provision through the medium of the Welsh language; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information requested is not available centrally.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Welsh Development Agency regarding new regional headquarters offices for the north East Wales and Swansea and West Glamorgan district operations of the agency.

Mr. David Hunt: I regularly meet the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency to discuss a wide range of issues.

Orthopaedic Surgery

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the south Glamorgan health authority regarding the completion of the contract with his Department to provide 200 additional knee and hip replacement operations for those on consultants' waiting books for more than 18 months; what approaches have been made to him in relation to staffing difficulties in orthopaedic operating theatres in the Cardiff Royal Group of Hospitals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Responsibility for meeting the patients charter guarantees for knee and hip replacement operations rests with health authorities, who need to negotiate appropriate contracts with a range of providers.

No approaches have been made to the Department about staffing levels in orthopaedic theatres in any of the hospitals in the Cardiff Royal Group.

Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his statement to the House on 1 March, *Official Report*, columns 22-23, in relation to Cardiff's status as capital city of Wales, when he proposes to meet the leaders of Cardiff city council and South Glamorgan county council, and the chairman of Cardiff Bay development corporation; by what date he intends to complete the definition of the study into Cardiff's future; what financial contribution he intends to make towards the cost of such consultancy studies as arise from the definition of a study; what public consultation exercise he will propose; and when he proposes to make a further statement.

Mr. David Hunt: I expect the meeting to take place shortly. No decisions will be taken until I have discussed the proposal fully with those concerned.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received from the West Glamorgan and the North East Wales training and enterprise councils requesting approval for an expenditure from accumulated surpluses on TEC headquarters buildings; if he will issue guidelines on capital expenditure financed from accumulated surpluses on accommodation; if he will make it his policy to cap expenditure on office accommodation by TECs in excess of own requirements; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: TECs are required to seek my approval for all expenditure including the use of operating surpluses. To date only one major capital expenditure project, the North East Wales TEC business development centre, has been approved. TEC proposals are considered on their merit in support of local economic development but the normal criteria governing expenditure on capital projects are applied.

EMPLOYMENT

President of Industrial Tribunals

Mr. Janner: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the cost of the removal of the accommodation of the president of industrial tribunals to 29 Woburn place; and how much of that cost was incurred for the refurbishing of those premises.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is planned to move the president of industrial tribunals and support staff from existing accommodation in Gatcliffe house, Ebury Bridge road, to refurbished accommodation at 29 Woburn place. The estimated cost of this relocation is £427,000 of which £383,000 is for refurbishing the premises.

Women's Issues

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *504*, on how many occasions decisions of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Women's Issues have been made known to Parliament and the public.

Mr. McLoughlin: Announcements on the Government's decisions, arrived at through Cabinet Committee meetings, will be made as appropriate.

Publicity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 2 June 1992 to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), *Official Report*, column 469, what is her Department's *(a)* current outturn estimate for publicity expenditure for 1992-93 and *(b)* budgeted publicity expenditure for 1993-94.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department's current outturn estimate for publicity expenditure for 1992-93 is £11·5 million. Budgeted publicity expenditure for 1993-94 is £12 million. These figures include publicity expenditure for the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service and the Health and Safety Executive.

Unemployment

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *319*, if she will give a regional breakdown of the figure of 275,000 unemployed whose last job was in self-employment.

Mr. McLoughlin: Estimates from the summer (June to August) 1992 indicate that in each region of Great Britain the numbers unemployed on the International Labour Organisation definition (not seasonally adjusted), who reported their employment status in their last job as self-employed were as follows.

Region	*Number*
Great Britain	275,000
Northern	[1]
Yorkshire and Humberside	17,000
East Midlands	19,000
East Anglia	12,000
South East	117,000

Region	Number
Greater London	51,000
Rest of South East	66,000
South West	32,000
West Midlands	20,000
North West	26,000
Wales	11,000
Scotland	14,000

[1]— Estimate below 10,000.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people who had been unemployed in the United Kingdom for 12 months and more were *(a)* 18 to 25 years, *(b)* 26 to 40, *(c)* 41 to 50 and *(d)* 50 to 65 plus years in May 1979 and at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: Claimant unemployment figures by age and duration are only available from October 1983, and only on a quarterly basis, for specific age and duration bands. The table gives the extent of the available data.

United Kingdom claimant unemployed for over 12 months (not seasonally adjusted)

Age	October 1983	January 1993
18-24	320,202	209,554
25-39	358,197	431,239
40-49	177,077	191,449
50+	268,636	197,844
Total 18+	1,124,112	1,030,086

Employment Training

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *126*, if she will give for each year of operation the numbers getting jobs immediately after leaving an employment training scheme and in jobs six months after leaving a scheme.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information available is in the following table.

Employment training: Job outcomes for Great Britain

per cent.

Year	Proportion of leavers in a job[1]	
	Immediately after leaving their training	Six months after leaving their training
July 1989 to March 1990	26	n/a
April 1990 to March 1991	25	n/a
April 1991 to March 1992	20	[2]31

Source: Employment training leavers and follow-up databases.
Notes:

[1]Jobs includes full-time, part-time and self-employment.
[2]Former trainees have been surveyed six months after leaving employment training only since January 1991.

Community Work, Swindon

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to encourage work in the community in Swindon.

Mr. McLoughlin: My right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State has been reviewing with colleagues the range of measures we already have in place to help unemployed people to find and keep jobs, to ensure that they are as effective as possible.

We have been examining further ways in which to enable unemployed people to use their time actively and constructively so that they remain in touch with the world of work.

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are being taken by her Department to ensure the payment of redundancy payments at Matrix Churchill in the Coventry area; and how many jobs are involved.

Mr. McLoughlin: The redundancy payments service has paid statutory redundancy payments from the national insurance fund to 209 former employees of Matrix Churchill Ltd. A further five claims were rejected as ineligible. The last payment was made on 15 February; there are no outstanding claims.

Concessionary Bus Fares

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average value per user of concessionary bus fares schemes for the elderly provided by each district council in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984.

Mr. Freeman: I have been asked to reply.

Information on concessionary fare schemes for the elderly is not available.

Expenditure each year on concessionary fares schemes in total by Cambridgeshire county council and each district council in Cambridgeshire is shown in the table. The figures, supplied by local authorities, include expenditure on concessions for the elderly, disabled, blind and young people. The Department does not have information on the number of users of the concessionary fares schemes.

New net current expenditure on concessionary fares schemes: Cambridgeshire: 1983-84 to 1992-93

£ thousands

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	[1]1992-93
Cambridgeshire County Council	337	346	339	377	370	427	885	362	285	371
Cambridge District Council	57	68	85	92	100	113	97	77	209	203
East Cambridgeshire District Council	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	7	21	21
Fenland District Council	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	9	10

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*[1]1992-93*
Huntingdonshire District Council	15	20	18	19	19	18	18	19	40	44
Peterborough District Council	65	69	82	71	110	81	74	135	137	134
South Cambridgeshire District Council	4	5	6	7	6	5	5	49	52	59

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Children's Theatre

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the Arts Council project grants which have been granted to children's theatre.

Mr. Brooke: During the current year, there were nine project grants awarded to children's theatre companies, as follows:

	£
Lambeth Children's Theatre	28,000
Neti Neti	28,000
Open Hand	22,220
Dodgy Clutch	18,070
Action Transport	16,650
The Glee Club	15,600
MYPT	15,000
Token Gestures	11,700
Working Parts	6,000

There were additionally seven project grants to young people's theatre and theatre in education groups. The Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils and the regional arts boards also made project grants to a large number of children's and young people's theatre groups.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will discuss with the regional arts boards the establishment of specific awards to children's theatre within their areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Arts Council and the former regional arts associations issued a joint policy statement on theatre for children and young people, following the 1985 Warwick conference. That policy still applies and continues to be widely endorsed.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Genetic Diversity

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures his Department is taking to ensure preservation of genetic diversity in vegetable, fruit and grain varieties.

Mr. Curry: The Department funds a number of plant genetic resource collections, including the vegetable gene bank at Wellesbourne, Warwickshire and the national fruit collection at Brogdale, Kent. The Government, through the Overseas Development Administration, is a major funder of the International Board for Plant Genetic Resources and other centres that hold collections of genetic resources. The Government participate in international efforts to establish networks of ex-situ plant genetic resource collections.

Poultry Inspection

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions have taken place or are taking place on the establishment of an egency for the purposes of poultry meat inspection.

Mr. Soames: The Government announced last year that a national meat hygiene service is to be established. It will be responsible for enforcing hygiene and welfare rules in licensed fresh red and white meat plants in Great Britain. It will have an important deregulatory impact by providing a consistent and cost-effective service which will be of benefit to industry and consumers alike. Detailed planning is under way, in close consultation and discussion with all the interested organisations concerned.

Agricultural Training Board (Secretary)

Mr. Conway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what post inspection was undertaken by his Department in the case of an Agricultural Training Board secretary who failed the civil service typewriting grade test in 1987, and had the grade of post altered to assistant administrative officer.

Mr. Curry: We are unable to supply the information required without further details to enable identification of the post in question. The grade of assistant administrative officer is not one used within the agricultural training board.

Myxomatosis

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *209*, if he will make a further statement on the availability of myxomatosis vaccine.

Mr. Soames: On 18 February the Veterinary Products Committee considered the data supplied by Intervet (UK) Ltd. in support of their application for a licence for a myxomatosis vaccine. It advised that a licence could be issued provided the company met certain conditions. The company is addressing these. I hope a licence will be issued later this month, although, on this basis, it is likely to be May before the company is able to make supplies widely available.

Oxamyl

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will detail the measures taken by his Department to ensure the absence of Oxamyl from imported food; and how many prosecutions for the presence of Oxamyl there have been during the past 12 months.

Mr. Soames: Oxamyl is approved for use on food crops in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. Monitoring of both

domestically produced and imported food is carried out by the Government's working party on pesticide residues. Maximum residue levels for oxamyl in various crops have been set by the United Nations Codex Alimentarius Commission. There have been no prosecutions for the presence of Oxamyl during the past 12 months.

Moroccan Tomatoes

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the importation of Moroccan tomatoes.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend has received one letter about the effect of tomato imports from Morocco on growers' returns.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Spring: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has now completed his review of the five environmentally sensitive areas which were first designated in 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: I am today laying before both Houses of Parliament statutory instruments providing for the upgrading of the five environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs) that were first designated in 1988. These are:

Breckland;
Clun (formerly Shropshire Borders);
North Peak;
Suffolk River Valleys;
Test Valley

In the Breckland ESA I am introducing new payments aimed at extending the area of lowland heath. New payments will also be available in the Clun ESA to enhance grassland diversity and encourage hedgerow and woodland management. The provisions extend the boundaries of the North Peak ESA and provide additional encouragement to regenerate heather moorland. In the Suffolk River Valleys ESA the boundary extensions bring in additional valleys and provide for further enhancement of the valley grasslands. I have also decided that new management agreements should be offered to farmers and landowners in the Test Valley ESA and that the boundaries of this area should be extended. I hope that the changes that I am introducing in this ESA will attract wider support than has the current scheme.

I am also laying before both Houses a short amending order which will bring the Pennine Dales ESA scheme into line with other ESAs by extending the scope of woodland payments.

Information packs giving details of the new schemes are being placed in the Libraries and are being sent to farmers in each area from whom applications are now invited. The revisions that I am introducing build on the achievements of the existing schemes. They will strengthen their beneficial environmental effects which are described in the published monitoring reports which will also be available in the Libraries later this month.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep were tested for organophosphate residues and with what results after the last compulsory dip.

Mr. Soames: The last compulsory sheep dip occurred between 22 September and 2 November 1991. In 1991, 82 samples of renal fat were taken from sheep under the national surveillance scheme and tested for residues of organophosphorus compounds. No residues above the maximum residue limits were detected. Sixty samples have been taken in 1992. Of the 48 analysed to date, no residues have been detected above the maximum residue limit.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the amounts, expressed as appropriate, of the main generic compounds of *(a)* organophosphates, *(b)* organochlorines and *(c)* pyrethroides used or sold as sheep dip in Britain in each year since 1973.

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not readily available. I shall write to the hon. Member when it has been obtained.

Mr. Hain: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has regarding the possibility of organophosphorus compounds or their metabolites getting into and remaining in the flesh and/or offals of sheep dipped in MAFF-approved dips.

Mr. Soames: The licensing assessment carried out under the Medicines Act 1968 requires applicants to submit data demonstrating the persistence of residues of veterinary medicines in food-producing animals including sheep. Where necessary, withdrawal periods, i.e. the minimum time between completion of treatment and slaughter, are subsequently specified in product literature. The Animals, Meat, Meat products (Examination for Residues and Maximum Residue Limits) Regulations 1991 make it an offence to fail to observe these withdrawal periods.

In addition, Ministry veterinary staff undertake random sampling each year under the national surveillance scheme for monitoring residues of veterinary medicines in meat. No organophosphorus residues above the maximum residue limit have been detected in sheep meat under this surveillance programme in recent years.

Meat Inspections

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made as to the equivalence of the qualifications of veterinary officers in each member state of the EC in respect of the hygiene and inspection requirements for fresh meat.

Mr. Soames: Since 1978 the Community has had harmonised rules on training requirements and the mutual recognition of veterinary surgeons. They require any member state to allow veterinary surgeons, upon presentation of the correct certification, to practise on their territory.

Other member states have traditionally made more use of veterinary personnel in meat hygiene work. In many instances their salaries are comparatively lower than in the United Kingdom and they are used not only to supervise abattoirs and perform ante-mortem inspections on all animals, but also for post-mortem inspection which will normally continue to be done by meat inspectors in this country.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make an estimate of the number and percentage of *(a)* unmarried and *(b)* married women who have retired at 60 years of age and have during the past 12 months become entitled to receive a full state retirement pension based on their own contributions.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested.

At 31 March 1992, 162,570 women resident in Great Britain aged 60 at their last birthday were receiving basic state pension—either on their own or their husband's contributions. Of these 46,120 (28·4 per cent.) were receiving the full rate basic pension based on their own contributions.

A breakdown by marital status is not available.

Earnings Link

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer on 1 March, *Official Report*, column 47, on the cost of reintroducing earnings upratings for retirement pensions and linked benefits, if, on the basis of the same assumptions as used in the answer, he will estimate the effect on national insurance contribution rates in the years from 1996-97 to 2005-06.

Miss Widdecombe: An estimate of the increase in the main class 1 joint employee-employer contributions for national insurance which could be required is in the table. The estimate excludes contributions payable to the national health service.

	Percentage increase
1996-97	0·2
1997-98	0·4
1998-99	0·6
1999-00	0·8
2000-01	1·0
2001-02	1·2
2002-03	1·3
2003-04	1·5
2004-05	1·6
2005-06	1·8

Note: Derived from estimates underlying tables 13, 14 and 15 of the "National Insurance Fund Long Term Financial Estimates—Report of the Government Actuary on the Second Quinquennial review under Section 137 of the Social Security Act 1975", published in July 1990 (HoC 582).

Benefits

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the effect on Treasury revenues in 1993-94 and in a full year of raising child benefit to £9·55 a week for all children assuming *(a)* corresponding increases in income-related benefits for families and *(b)* no corresponding increases in income-related benefits.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Based on the latest estimates of the numbers of children for whom these benefits will be paid in 1993-94, there would be additional costs of about £260 million after corresponding increases in other benefits, and about £150 million without such increases.

Mrs. Helen Dacey

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received in relation to the withholding by the solicitors acting for the estate of the late Mrs. Helen Dacey of the money paid by the Benefits Agency in respect of attendance alllowance DSS reference 379091501, and its delayed transfer to the beneficiary of the estate.

Mr. Scott: The administration of attendance allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from M. Bichard to Mrs. Jane Kennedy, dated 4 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what representations he had received in relation to the withholding by the solicitors acting for the estate of the late Mrs. Helen Dacey of the money paid by the Benefits Agency in respect of attendance allowance DDS reference 379091501, and its delayed transfer to the beneficiary of the estate.

Following Mrs. Dacey's death, the Benefit's Agency was in contact with the solicitors who were administering her estate regarding the arrears of Attendance Allowance. Correspondence was received from various other parties about this. However a thorough search of the papers relating to Mrs. Dacey at both the Attendance Allowance Unit and the local benefit office have revealed no representation that the solicitors were withholding payment of the arrears to the beneficiary of the estate.

I am sorry that I am unable to be of more assistance in this matter. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

HEALTH

Spending Statistics

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the amount of money in real terms spent from the national health service budget per head of population for each family health service authority, district health authority and regional health authority in *(a)* 1991-92 and *(b)* 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The allocation of funds to district health authorities (DHAs) is a matter for regional health authorities (RHAs) and detailed information is not collected centrally. The spending of family health services authorities (FHSAs) is primarily demand-led and funded accordingly. However, information which relates the 1991-92 total revenue expenditure of RHAs, DHAs and FHSAs to their resident populations have been placed in the Library. Similar information for 1992-93 will be available towards the end of the year.

The figures for the FHSAs do not include the full cost of general dental services as the Dental Practice Board became responsible for making most payments direct to dental practitioners from 1 April 1991. Consequently the figures are not fully comparable with those for earlier years. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 7 December 1992 at columns *515-20*.

The RHA and DHA figures for 1991-92 are not comparable with those for earlier years as they show the authorities primarily as purchasers rather than providers

of health care. The figures for DHAs will vary significantly reflecting a transitional position as each RHA moves towards allocating funds to DHAs on a weighted capitation basis. Figures for total spending per capita include other resources (such as regional budgets and local income) in addition to allocations for resident population.

Patient Services

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what services to patients were increased in each region in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: Information about general and acute activity in each regional health authority is given in the table.

General and acute activity growth by region 1989-90 to 1992-93
Ordinary admissions and day cases

		1989-90 Actual	1990-91 Actual	1991-92 Actual	1992-92 @ Q3 Forecast	Changes 1989-90 to 1990-91 Actual per cent.	Changes 1990-91 to 1991-92 Actual per cent.	Changes 1991-92 to 1992-93 Forecast per cent.	Overall 1989-90 to 1992-93 Forecast per cent.
A	Northern	487,996	505,216	532,953	564,980	3·5	5·5	6·0	15·8
B	Yorkshire	564,200	580,596	614,400	659,560	2·9	5·8	7·4	16·9
C	Trent	619,246	641,330	666,702	705,949	3·6	7·1	2·8	14·0
D	East Anglia	282,671	285,833	305,930	324,239	1·1	7·0	6·0	14·7
E	North West Thames	434,450	427,509	468,976	524,638	−1·6	9·7	11·9	20·8
F	North East Thames	540,113	547,003	587,704	606,363	1·3	7·4	3·2	12·3
G	South East Thames	493,396	490,349	534,695	553,668	−0·6	9·0	3·5	12·2
H	South West Thames	360,174	356,058	392,617	410,082	−1·1	10·3	4·4	13·9
J	Wessex	391,005	409,328	446,205	477,409	4·7	9·0	7·0	22·1
K	Oxford	297,099	288,064	311,548	345,501	−3·0	8·2	10·9	16·3
L	South Western	461,908	461,902	505,148	538,226	0·0	9·4	6·5	16·5
M	West Midlands	709,679	735,613	782,583	793,803	3·7	6·4	1·4	11·9
N	Mersey	392,991	397,085	424,739	437,169	1·0	7·0	2·9	11·2
P	North Western	696,469	710,967	751,267	758,796	2·1	5·7	1·0	8·9
S	Special Health Authorities	102,498	103,945	111,534	108,860	1·4	7·3	−2·4	6·2
T	England	6,833,895	6,940,798	7,457,001	7,809,243	1·6	7·4	4·7	14·3

Forelands Hospital, Bromsgrove

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what departmental guidelines apply to the sale of Forelands hospital, Bromsgrove; what is the role of her Department; and if she will make a statement on the proceeds of the sale and the use to which they have been put.

Mr. Sackville: Departmental guidelines to health authorities on the sale of surplus National Health Service property are set out in "Property Transactions in the National Health Service". Property disposals are fully delegated to health authorities, and the Department was not involved in the sale of Forelands orthopaedic hospital.

Of the £4.2 million realised from the sale, £50,000 was returned to South Birmingham district; the remaining money was transferred to the region's operational capital programme funding to form part of the overall capital resources available to the region.

Huntington's Chorea

Mr. Eric Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside, (Mr. Blunkett) of 17 February, *Official Report*, column 206, if she will make additional funding available to health authorities to make provision for the care of people suffering from Huntington's Chorea.

Mr. Yeo: The provision of appropriate care for people suffering from Huntington's Disease is a matter for health authorities. As announced in December, allocations to health authorities for 1993-94 have been increased by an average of 0·8 per cent. above projected inflation, after public sector pay restraint has been taken into account.

Childhood Cancers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what preliminary reports she has received from the United Kingdom co-ordinating committee on cancer research on its five hypotheses on the cause of childhood cancers research project; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None. I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 1 March 1993 at column *28*.

Information Technology

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of current inquiries made by her Department into the purchasing of information technology and software.

Mr. Sackville: The purchasing of information technology and software by the national health service is a local matter for health authorities, and my Department is not informed routinely. In common with other matters, these purchases may be the subject of local audit enquiry.

In January this year, authorities were instructed to submit all proposals for investments of £1 million or more on such projects to the NHS management executive for scrutiny against published criteria.

The Department assists by issuing guidance on good practice in procuring computer systems. The latest revision of this guidance will be published in April 1993 under the generic title of "Procurement of Information Systems Effectively" (POISE).

Tomlinson Report

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *541*, on the Tomlinson report, if she will list the 10 recommendations which have not been accepted.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government have accepted 96 of the recommendations in the Tomlinson report and have not accepted three: those which refer to the relocation of the Royal Brompton and the Royal Marsden to the Charing Cross building. The remaining seven have either been referred to the London implementation group for further advice or, although agreed with in principle, are being taken forward in a different manner to that recommended in the report.

Hepatitis B

Mr. Conway: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to encourage regular medical checks for consultants, doctors and nursing staff in the national health service with particular reference to hepatitis B infection; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: It is the responsibility of national health service employing authorities to provide occupational health services for health care workers.

Revised guidelines designed to strengthen arrangements for preventing transmission of hepatitis B in the hospital setting have been produced by the advisory group on hepatitis, which advises the four United Kingdom health departments. The guidelines have gone out to consultation with professional bodies and the NHS.

Suicide

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will identify the cost-effective NHS interventions intended to contribute to the targeted reduction in suicide rates.

Mr. Yeo: There are a number of measures which national health service and social services staff can take to help meet the suicide targets. These include the establishment of multi-disciplinary audit meetings in relation to suicides, the implementation of observation policies in all units for those patients who need them and the regular training of teams in the assessment and management of suicidal risk and in the latest treatment techniques for those at risk.

Information on evaluating the effectiveness of interventions is contained in "The Health of the Nation" mental illness key area handbook which has been distributed to both NHS and social services managers. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Elderly Patients, Newcastle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the average number of beds available in wards responsible to Newcastle district health authority caring for elderly patients in each year since 1982.

Mr. Yeo: The answer is given in the table.

Total number of average daily available beds.
Elderly patients 1982-92
Newcastle district health authority

	Number
1982	355
1983	412
1984	409
1985	418
1986	457
1987-88	489
1988-89	499
1989-90	474
1990-91	457
[1]1991-92	425

[1] includes trust figures

Source: SD2A; 1982-86 SH3 return; 1987—88-1991-92 KHO3 return.

Figures shown relate only to beds specifically designated for the elderly. Elderly patients also occupy a significant number of beds in other wards.

Doctors (Alcohol Consumption)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish guidelines as to the amount of alcohol doctors should drink while on duty.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

"Making London Better"

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much extra money, in real terms, will be made available to regions, outside the Thames regions, in 1993-94, following the implementation of "Making London Better".

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's reply of 8 December 1992 to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) at columns *635-36*, announcing the 1993-94 allocations to all regional health authorities. These allocations were made after setting aside sums to improve health services in the capital.

Ponteland Hospital

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds were available in Ponteland hospital, Northumberland *(a)* in 1991 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Yeo: Ponteland is a geriatric hospital with an overall capacity of 61 beds. Since 1990 the number of beds occupied has declined to between 32 and 38 for continuing care patients. Newcastle district health authority has replaced the continuing care service provided by Ponteland hospital with the purchase of 38 nursing home beds.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who is responsible for the out-of-hours care of the patients of school dentists.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since October 1990 all children have been able to register with a general dental practitioner who, as part of their continuing care, makes arrangements for treatment out of hours. Any child not registered with

a general practitioner can seek treatment from the Community dental service, who would then be responsible for arranging any necessary out-of-hours treatment.

District Health Funding

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what progress has been made towards providing a greater allocation of resources for health care in Southend, as announced on 12 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *482*;

(2) if she will give a general direction to regional health authorities to ensure that no underfunded district receives less in real terms in 1993-94 than in 1992-93;

(3) what measures she is making to ensure that underfunded health districts receive extra funds annually until the discrepancy is removed.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Regional health authorities are responsible for managing the movement of their districts towards weighted capitation funding. The following guidance was issued to all RHAs on 4 December 1992:

"Regions will therefore be asked to report on their planned deployment of the 1993-94 allocation and in particular to demonstrate clear progress towards equalisation. The pace of such progress and whether it should be achieved by reducing resources allocated to districts above their capitation share is a matter for individual regions to judge in the light of local circumstances."

Comprehensive national information on sub-regional allocations for 1993-94 is not yet available, but the guidance above gives clear direction on the policy to be followed.

North East Thames regional health authority gave Southend district health authority £2·7 million real growth in 1992-93 and a further £1·6 million real growth is planned for 1993-94. This growth has occurred over a period when the district's weighted capitation entitlement has also been increasing due to population changes and to changes in the allocation of formula. These changes mean that despite the additional growth, Southend DHA will remain 8 per cent. below its new weighted capitation entitlement in 1993-94. The new DHA into which it will merge in April 1993 will receive further growth in future years with the aim of bringing it to its capitation share.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Decision-making

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances, where cases are raised with the Minister, decisions are made at ministerial level; in what circumstances cases are referred to officials at the high commission or embassy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In all entry clearance cases where a Member corresponds with the Minister, the migration and visa correspondence unit is asked to assess, on information supplied by the post, whether there is any evidence of illogicality or procedural error, or whether there are any compassionate circumstances that have not been taken into account. Should the inquiry raise such matters, the Minister will consider the case.

Mongolia

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to have British Council representation in Mongolia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no plans at present for British Council representation in Mongolia.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to meet the President of Cyprus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have congratulated Mr. Clerides on his recent election success and welcome his commitment to attend continuing negotiations on the intercommunal dispute to be held by the United Nations in New York. No firm date has yet been set for a meeting with President Clerides, but we hope a mutually convenient opportunity may be found in advance of those talks.

Hong Kong

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals he has for improving relations with China over Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: Diplomatic contacts with China have taken place in recent weeks in Peking. Our aim has been to explore whether a firm and productive basis could be found for the two sides to enter formal talks on the arrangements for the 1994-95 elections. In announcing last week that the Bill embodying those arrangements would not be published on 26 February, the Hong Kong Government promised to set out the reasons for the delay. The Governor made a statement to the Legislative Council on 5 March to this end.

Since the Governor's policy address to the Legislative Council last October, we have made clear that we are ready to talk at any time and without pre-conditions in an effort to reach an understanding with the Chinese side on these electoral arrangements. The Legislative Council is already examining the boundaries and Election Commission Bill. The Executive Council endorsed on 2 February draft legislation embodying the remainder of the Governor's constitutional proposals. So there is no mystery about what the draft legislation contains. We passed a copy of it to the Chinese side on 6 February. At the same time we repeated formally our willingness to talk at any time without pre-conditions; and we explained to the Chinese side that the Bill was ready for gazetting.

We received a positive response on the principle of talks from the Chinese side. To help ensure that talks got off to the best possible start, we and the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, decided to postpone our original plan for gazettal on 12 February, while making clear to the Chinese side that there could not be an indefinite delay, given the practical need to press ahead with legislation. We proposed an early starting date for the talks and told the Chinese side of the composition of our negotiating team.

In the absence of a Chinese response, we and the Governor decided, again with the advice of the Executive Council, to delay gazettal for a second time on 19 February and for a third time on 26 February. We wished to give every possible opportunity for the Chinese side to respond.

At the beginning of March, we did receive a reply. But despite further diplomatic contacts, in which we have continued to press for early talks, we have not yet been able to announce a starting date for them. We have made

plain that we are ready for the talks to proceed on the basis of the Joint Declaration, the principle of convergence with the Basic Law, and the relevant understandings and agreements reached between China and Britain. We consider the Governor's proposals are wholly compatible with these.

As far as we are concerned, we are ready to talk immediately. Following further exchanges in Peking in recent days, there remain only a few points of disagreement which could and should be resolved quickly. In the meantime, we and the Governor decided to defer gazettal for a fourth time.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the annual report on Hong Kong will be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Goodlad: The report is being published and laid before Parliament today. Copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Thames Helicopter Pad

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is taking in respect of the plans submitted by Thames Heliport plc for a mobile helicopter pad on the Thames; and what representations he has received.

Mr. Baldry: I am aware of the proposal by Thames Heliport plc for a floating heliport on the Thames. The scheme's promoters have been encouraged to discuss their plans with the appropriate local planning authorities. It is, of course, for those authorities to consider whether an application for planning permission should be made.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received correspondence on this matter from the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Ms. Hoey), the Theatres Trust, the Shakespeare Globe Trust, the London Rivers Association, the London Boroughs Association, and from the London borough of Tower Hamlets.

Isle of Wight

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will announce the start date of a new authority for the Isle of Wight and the arrangements for a shadow authority for the island.

Mr. Howard: In line with my announcement on 21 December I have consulted the authorities on the Isle of Wight about the timing and arrangements for structural change. In the light of this consultation I intend, if Parliament approves a new local government structure for the island in due course, to establish any new authority on 1 April 1995, with a shadow authority elected in May 1994. This will ensure there is adequate time for preparation of effective arrangements for the provision of services to the people. The county council elections will go ahead on 6 May and are not affected by these proposals

Radiation Leak, Sellafield

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he plans in the arrangements for publishing details of leaks of radiation from Sellafield, following the leak of 13 February.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Any need for change would be based on the outcome of current investigations of recent incidents, which would have to be discussed and agreed with other Government Departments.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the implications of the recent leak at Sellafield for the process and cost of decommissioning the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* None. The process and cost of decommissioning is primarily a matter for the Department of Trade and Industry and Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he received from the Meteorological Office at the time of the recent leak from Sellafield about weather conditions in the area.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* No information was received from the Meteorological Office.

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish *(a)* the total staff complement of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and *(b)* the number of field inspectors currently in post at HMIP; and what were the corresponding figures for *(a)* and *(b)* for the air pollution inspectorate at the point of transfer to HMIP.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* HMIP currently employs 169 inspectors out of a total complement of 377·5 staff. On its formation in April 1987 HMIP had a total complement of 199 staff, including 42 inspectors and eight sampling officers who transferred from the former industrial air pollution inspectorate.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year since 1 April 1990 every instance of his using his powers under section 40(6) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to give a direction to treat expenditure as being for capital purposes, showing separately in each case the name of the authority or authorities, the estimated amount of the expenditure and his reason for giving the direction.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* Directions under section 40(6) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 have been issued between 1 April 1990 and 2 March in respect of the following types of expenditure:

Redundancy costs

Directions have been issued in respect of substantial expenditure on lump-sum redundancy or severance payments.

Late rating adjustments

Directions have been issued in respect of substantial "late

rating adjustments". These are refunds by authorities of rates under the old rating system arising from retrospective changes in ratepayers' liabilities, normally as a result of appeals.

Losses arising on bank deposits

Directions have been issued in respect of substantial provisions for estimated losses arising from financial difficulties of certain banks (BCCI, Chancery and Edington).

Tenants' choice scheme

A direction has been issued in respect of interest arising on instalment payments by an authority to the purchaser of housing under the Tenants' Choice scheme.

It is intended to issue directions in respect of certain costs arising in connection with debts inherited from the former Greater London Council. No such directions had been issued at 2 March.

Details of all the individual directions issued are set out in the tables.

Directions relating to redundancy payments

Authority	*Date direction was issued*	*Amount £ million*
Directions issued in respect of 1990-91		
Southwark	11 June 1990	5·000
Rochdale	11 June 1990	1.035
Wigan	11 June 1990	5·000
Northants	11 June 1990	0·803
Bristol	9 July 1990	5·000
Liverpool	13 July 1990	0·673
Greenwich	23 July 1990	0·700
Bristol	15 August 1990	2·000
Hackney	30 August 1990	1·000
Hillingdon	30 August 1990	4·000
North Tyneside	10 September 1990	1·000
North Tyneside	13 September 1990	4·000
Hammersmith and Fulham	28 September 1990	0·750
Bradford	1 November 1990	1·500
Harrow	13 November 1990	2·900
Southwark	12 December 1990	3·000
Eastbourne	7 January 1991	0·423
Haringey	8 January 1991	6·000
Gosport	15 January 1991	0·300
Brent	17 January 1991	0·300
Manchester	18 January 1991	2·712
Eastleigh	23 January 1991	0·488
Newham	31 January 1991	2·368
Eastbourne	6 February 1991	0·040
Sheffield	19 February 1991	8·500
Ealing	28 February 1991	0·750
Barnsley	27 March 1991	1·500
Bexley	15 May 1991	0·489
Camden	5 July 1991	2·100
Tameside	6 September 1991	0·434
Merton	6 September 1991	0·382
North Tyneside	13 November 1991	0·810
Directions issued in respect of 1990-91 and 1991-92		
Bromley	6 December 1990	1·300
Greenwich	17 January 1991	3·300
Tower Hamlets	21 February 1991	9·000
Wigan	28 February 1991	5·000
Salford	13 March 1991	2·621
Newcastle upon Tyne	26 April 1991	4·500
Bexley	15 May 1991	0·489
Hammersmith and Fulham	6 September 1991	0·250
Directions issued in respect of 1991-92		
Southwark	12 December 1990	5·000
Derbyshire	25 January 1991	11·000
Haringey	15 February 1991	7·000
Sheffield	19 February 1991	2·500
Lambeth	5 March 1991	11·500
Sutton	14 March 1991	0·400
Hillingdon	15 March 1991	6·000
Rochdale	3 April 1991	0·800
Ipswich	31 May 1991	0·775
Lambeth	26 June 1991	2·000
Rochdale	4 July 1991	0·800
Brent	10 July 1991	1·000
Hackney	29 August 1991	2·000
Dartford	29 August 1991	0·420
Coventry	3 September 1991	1·750
Bristol	5 September 1991	1·200
Merton	6 September 1991	0·391
Hammersmith and Fulham	6 September 1991	0·500
Harrow	25 September 1991	2·200

Authority	Date direction was issued	Amount £ million
Gosport	16 October 1991	0·250
Brent	28 October 1991	1·000
Lewisham	6 November 1991	4·000
Sutton	13 November 1991	0·200
North Tyneside	13 November 1991	1·000
Reading	18 November 1991	0·600
South Bedfordshire	18 December 1991	0·500
Chorley	31 December 1991	0·230
St. Albans	3 January 1992	0·310
Stoke	20 January 1992	1·089
Sefton	5 February 1992	0·500
Eastbourne	13 February 1992	0·216
Manchester	14 February 1992	1·800
Liverpool	19 February 1992	4·995
Harrow	27 February 1992	0·800
Barnsley	5 March 1992	1·000
Ealing	8 April 1992	2·000
Harrow	12 May 1992	0·450
Reading	20 May 1992	0·150
Enfield	1 June 1992	1·200
Camden	23 June 1992	4·520
Havering	5 August 1992	0·470
Directions issued in respect of 1991-92 and 1992-93		
Northumberland	17 December 1991	3·500
Bristol	31 December 1991	3·500
South Tyneside	31 December 1991	2·750
Newcastle upon Tyne	3 January 1992	6·165
Thamesdown	7 January 1992	2·000
Bristol	16 January 1992	3·900
Dartford	22 January 1992	0·600
Bury	24 January 1992	2·500
Adur	6 February 1992	0·125
Islington	21 February 1992	2·400
Harrowgate	18 March 1992	0·133
Adur	5 June 1992	0·085
Directions issued in respect of 1992-93		
Salford	20 December 1991	3·000
Havant	17 January 1992	0·500
Southwark	21 January 1992	5·000
Shropshire	28 January 1992	1·000
Wigan	5 February 1992	3·000
Greenwich	11 February 1992	2·000
Derbyshire	11 February 1992	5·000
Sutton	27 February 1992	1·250
Gloucestershire	27 February 1992	2·200
Lambeth	28 February 1992	5·000
Brent	5 March 1992	1·000
Rochdale	5 March 1992	1·250
Tower Hamlets	18 March 1992	5·000
Langbaurgh on Tees	12 May 1992	0·600
Harlow	1 June 1992	3·200
Basildon	17 June 1992	1·000
Hillingdon	6 July 1992	4·000
North Tyneside	13 July 1992	0·750
Three Rivers	13 July 1992	0·106
Brent	17 July 1992	1·000
Rochdale	17 July 1992	0·500
Havering	5 August 1992	0·500
St. Helens	7 August 1992	7·000
Welwyn Hatfield	7 September 1992	1·000
South Bedfordshire	12 October 1992	0·500
Haringey	22 October 1992	1·000
Hackney	10 November 1992	2·000
Stoke on Trent	10 November 1992	1·355
Harrow	12 November 1992	4·000
Brent	16 November 1992	1·250
Thamesdown	16 November 1992	0·500
Three Rivers	17 November 1992	0·018
North Devon	24 November 1992	0·249
Stevenage	24 November 1992	0·800
Sheffield	10 December 1992	4·000
Reading	23 December 1992	0·600
Stockton on Tees	5 January 1993	0·300
Birmingham	14 January 1993	20·000
South Tyneside	18 January 1993	0·850

Authority	Date direction was issued	Amount £ million
Winchester	20 January 1993	0·447
Brent	5 February 1993	0·550
Tameside	12 February 1993	0·500
Hackney	16 February 1993	2·500
Barnet	18 February 1993	0·900
Manchester	26 February 1993	10·000
Directions issued in respect of 1992-93 and 1993-94		
Greenwich	19 October 1992	3·000
Middlebrough	10 December 1992	2·000
Newham	10 December 1992	9·000
Greenwich	5 January 1993	3·000
Islington	5 January 1993	3·400
North Tyneside	18 January 1993	4·000
Sutton	22 January 1993	1·500
Adur	25 January 1993	0·140
Norwich	26 February 1993	1·888
Directions issued in respect of 1993-94		
Northumberland	10 December 1992	3·500
Bristol	10 December 1992	2·000
Richmond upon Thames	23 December 1992	0·800
Derbyshire	5 January 1993	6·000
Gloucestershire	8 January 1993	3·000
Salford	11 January 1993	3·000
Shropshire	4 February 1993	1·500
Hounslow	5 February 1993	1·000
Leicestershire	5 February 1993	2·500
Lambeth	16 February 1993	10·000
Leicester	23 February 1993	0·650
Hammersmith and Fulham	23 February 1993	1·000
Directions relating to late rating adjustments		
Islington	5 March 1992	3·809
Enfield	18 March 1992	2·265
Direction issued in respect of 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93		
North Tyneside	5 March 1992	2·750
Directions issued in respect of 1991-92		
Barnsley	5 March 1992	0·235
Bury	5 March 1992	0·280
Wakefield	5 March 1992	0·450
Newham	11 March 1992	3·225
Camden	11 March 1992	1·391
Newcastle upon Tyne	11 March 1992	1·955
Gateshead	11 March 1992	0·941
Enfield	11 March 1992	0·787
Northumbria PA	11 March 1992	0·413
Sunderland	11 March 1992	9·399
Middlesbrough	11 March 1992	0·152
Tyne and Wear FCDA	11 March 1992	0·079
Vale Royal	11 March 1992	0·060
Ryedale	11 March 1992	0·035
Chorley	11 March 1992	0·016
Darlington	11 March 1992	0·008
Newham	18 March 1992	2·410
Sunderland	12 May 1992	2·401
Tyne and Wear FCDA	12 May 1992	0·321
Directions issued in respect of 1991-92 and 1992-93		
Haringey	5 March 1992	4·300
Salford	5 March 1992	1·800
Newcastle upon Tyne	18 March 1992	6·045
Directions issued in respect of 1992-93		
Lambeth	28 February 1992	2·945
Greenwich	3 March 1992	2·420
Southwark	3 March 1992	2·629
Wandsworth	3 March 1992	2·916
Lewisham	3 March 1992	2·594
Islington	6 March 1992	1·940
Hammersmith and Fulham	17 March 1992	1·854
Hackney	2 April 1992	1·200
Bedfordshire	27 April 1992	4·000
Camden	27 August 1992	2·100

Authority	Date direction was issued	Amount £ million
Directions relating to bank losses		
Direction issued in respect of 1990-91		
Rugby	2 April 1992	0·100
Directions issued in respect of 1991-92		
Rother	19 February 1992	0·510
Stockport	6 March 1992	0·690
Southwark	6 March 1992	2·100
Mansfield	6 March 1992	1·665
Bury	6 March 1992	3·900
Bristol	6 March 1992	0·400
Greater Manchester FCDA	18 March 1992	1·370
Wigan	18 March 1992	1·590
Alnwick	19 March 1992	0·630
Welwyn Hatfield	31 March 1992	0·574
Hertsmere	28 May 1992	0·671
Direction issued in respect of 1992-93		
South Bedfordshire	20 February 1992	1·080
Direction relating to the tenants choice scheme		
Direction issued in respect of 1992-93		
Westminster	8 April 1992	1·923

Climate Change

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the working group II session of the intergovernmental panel on climate change held in Geneva on 8 to 12 February.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* Good progress was made towards agreeing a work plan for the reconstituted working group II, which will feed into the IPCC's second assessment report to be published in late 1995.

Supplementary Credit Approval

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much supplementary credit approval has been granted to each local authority for each year since 1 April 1990, showing separately the name of the authority, the amount and the purpose for which it was given.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* Supplementary credit approvals are issued by a number of Government Departments and comprehensive information at this level of detail is not held centrally. In their regular returns to my Department local authorities report the total amount of supplementary credit approvals they have received, or expect to receive, and I have arranged for a summary of the most recent information from each authority to be placed in the Library of the House.

I have arranged for more detailed information regarding supplementary credit approvals issued by my Department to be collated and this will be placed in the Library as soon as possible.

Recycling Exhibition

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how his Department will be represented at the international exhibition of recycling in Paris on 17 to 19 March.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* My Department is not being represented at the international exhibition in Paris.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Prime Minister's Questions

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the names of hon. Members who have in this Parliament had a question for oral answer to the Prime Minister listed on the Order Paper among the top six more than four times.

Mr. Newton: I am informed by the Table Office that, in this Parliament, up to and including questions tabled on Tuesday 2 March for answer on Tuesday 16 March, two hon. Members have had five questions to the Prime Minister for oral answer draw among the top six as a result of the random computer shuffle: they are my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Tony Banks). No hon. Member has had more than five such questions.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Cohesion Fund

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 26 October 1992, *Official Report*, columns *460-61*, on the cohesion fund, if he will provide the calculations on relative wealth and fund eligibility on the basis of *(a)* real exchange rates and *(b)* normal rates.

Sir John Cope: The normal rate for calculations of relative wealth in respect of the structural funds is purchasing power parities; and the Edinburgh European Council confirmed that this would be the basis used for calculations of relative wealth and eligibility for the cohesion fund.

The Edinburgh European Council also agreed that the four member states with a per capita GNP of less than 90 per cent. of the EC average in purchasing power parities

would be eligible for the cohesion fund. These member states are Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain. The United Kingdom's per capita GNP on a purchasing power parities basis is around the EC average.

Tax Offices, Southampton

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reason market-testing of clerical work in the Southampton tax offices was abandoned.

Mr. Dorrell: Last year the Inland Revenue started pilot market tests of certain services at four separate local sites including Southampton. It became clear that these initial tests would not be properly representative of market testing on a wider scale, and they were replaced early this year by a larger market test of the Revenue's secretarial and typing services across the whole of the South West region.

Income Tax

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the effect on Treasury revenues in 1993-94 of introducing an allowance against income tax of *(a)* £1,000 and *(b)* £2,000 for all working mothers; giving both full and first-year costs;

(2) if he will estimate the effect on Treasury revenues in 1993-94 of introducing an allowance against income tax of *(a)* £1,000 and *(b)* £2,000 for all working mothers with at least one child under five years, giving both full and first-year costs.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Estimate of the cost of introducing allowances against taxable incomes for working mothers and lone parents at 1993-94 levels are set out in the table. The first year cost would depend on how the measure was implemented.

	Cost (£ billion)	
	Allowance of (a) £1,000 per year	*Allowance of (b) £2,000 per year*
All working mothers[1]	0·6	1·1
All working mothers with a child under five[1]	0·2	0·4

[1] Including lone parents who are working.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update, to take account of the 1992 Budget, the information on tax changes contained in his answer of 3 March 1992 to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), *Official Report*, column *122*.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Latest estimates of the reduction in tax liability resulting from the changes in tax rates, allowances and thresholds are in the table. The 1978-79 income tax regime has been indexed to 1992-93 levels by reference to the statutory formula, and allowing for independent taxation. A reliable analysis of taxpayers with incomes over £80,000 is not available.

For the purposes of these calculations the indexed regime of 1978-79 is applied directly to the income base of 1992-93. In practice, retention of the regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Reduction in income tax compared with 1978-79 indexed regime

Range of individual's income in 1992-93 (£)	*Number of individuals[1] 1992-93 (million)*	*Total reduction in tax (£ million)*	*Average gain per individual (£)*
Under 5,000	3·5	520	150
5,000—10,000	8·1	3,100	390
10,000—15,000	6·2	4,500	730
15,000—20,000	3·8	4,100	1,080
20,000—30,000	3·2	5,300	1,700
30,000—50,000	1·2	4,000	3,400
50,000—80,000	0·3	2,700	9,700
over 80,000	0·1	6,800	48,200
Total	26·4	31,100	1,200

[1] Individuals who would be liable to tax under the indexed 1978-79 regime.

Income Tax

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his answer of 21 January 1992, to the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Battle), *Official Report*, column *128*, on the introduction of an upper limit for income tax allowances and reliefs for the years 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Estimates of the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1992-93 levels of income from imposition of the specified limits for allowances and reliefs within the current income tax system are given below. These are based on information compiled from a number of statistical surveys and are subject to more than the usual margin of uncertainty.

Limit £	*Yield £ million*
10,000	690
15,000	380
20,000	280

After restriction of the relevant allowances and reliefs to the basic rate the estimated further yield from imposing the specified limits would be as follows:

Full year yield at 1992-93 income levels, £ million
Limit for total allowances and reliefs

	After restriction to the basic rate of		
	£10,000	*£15,000*	*£20,000*
(a) all personal allowances except the basic personal allowances	610	360	270
(b) relief for personal pension contributions	560	310	230
(c) relief for employees' contributions to occupational pension schemes	630	370	270
(d) allowances and reliefs in *(a)* and *(b)*	510	300	230
(e) allowances and reliefs in *(a)* and *(c)*	580	350	270
(f) reliefs in *(b)* and *(c)*	500	300	230

	After restriction to the basic rate of £10,000	£15,000	£20,000
(g) allowances and reliefs in (a), (b) and (c)	480	290	220

The number of people with total allowances and reliefs in excess of £10,000 is just under 600,000. The corresponding figures for £15,000 and £20,000 are about 85,000 and 45,000 respectively. The estimates of revenue yield do not take account of any behavioural effects which might result from the introduction of the changes. It is not possible to provide detailed information for 1993-94.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average individual cumulative gain *(a)* in cash prices and *(b)* in 1991-92 prices to those earning (i) £5,000, (ii) £10,000, (iii) £15,000, (iv) £20,000, (v) £25,000, (vi) £30,000, (vii) £40,000, (viii) £50,000, (ix) £60,000, (x) £70,000 and (xi) £100,000 as a result of changes in (1) income tax and (2) income tax and national insurance since 1979 and 1987.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Latest estimates of the reduction in liability resulting from changes in national insurance and income tax rates, allowances and thresholds are in the table. The 1978-79 and 1987-88 income tax regimes have been indexed to 1992-93 levels by reference to the statutory formula and allowing for independent taxation.

	Average change in 1992-93 (£)			
	Compared with 1978-79 indexed regime		Compared with 1987-88 indexed regime	
Range of individuals income in 1992-93 (£)	Income tax	Income tax and National Insurance	Income tax	Income tax and National Insurance
Under 5,000	150	180	80	90
5,000-10,000	390	360	190	250
10,000-15,000	730	610	260	400
15,000-20,000	1,080	830	340	490
20,000-25,000	1,490	1,040	430	570
25,000-30,000	2,030	1,550	510	630
30,000-40,000	2,870	2,380	370	480
40,000-50,000	4,750	4,260	730	840
50,000-60,000	7,340	6,850	1,660	1,760
60,000-70,000	11,000	10,500	3,060	3,150
70,000-80,000	14,800	14,300	4,840	4,920
Over 80,000	48,200	47,500	18,900	18,900
Average	1,200	1,000	400	480

I regret that a reliable analysis of taxpayers with incomes over £100,000 is not available.

For the purposes of the calculations in the first two columns of the table the indexed regime of 1978-79 has been applied directly to the income base of 1992-93. In practice retention of the 1978-79 regime, indexed as appropriate, for the intervening years would have led to changes in the income base.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the total and average income and earned income in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 of *(a)* the top 1 per cent., *(b)* the top 5 per cent., *(c)* the top 10 per cent., *(d)* the bottom 70 per cent., *(e)* the bottom 10 per cent. of taxpayers and *(g)* all taxpayers.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Estimates are given in the table.

Quantile group of taxpayers	Total income (£ billion)	Average income (£)	Total earned income[1] (£ billion)	Average earned income (£)
1990-91				
Top 1 per cent.	28	107,800	21	81,400
Top 5 per cent.	69	52,200	54	41,700
Top 10 per cent.	103	39,100	84	32,100
Bottom 70 per cent.	161	8,800	148	8,100
Bottom 50 per cent	95	7,300	87	6,700
Bottom 10 per cent.	12	4,600	11	4,200
All taxpayers	358	13,600	316	12,100
1991-92				
Top 1 per cent.	29	114,700	23	89,600
Top 5 per cent.	71	56,000	59	46,300
Top 10 per cent.	106	41,900	90	35,600
Bottom 70 per cent.	165	9,300	154	8,700
Bottom 50 per cent.	97	7,600	90	7,100
Bottom 10 per cent.	12	4,800	11	4,500
All taxpayers	370	14,500	334	13,200
1992-93				
Top 1 per cent.	29	115,400	22	91,400
Top 5 per cent.	70	56,500	59	47,900
Top 10 per cent.	105	42,400	91	37,000
Bottom 70 per cent.	164	9,500	154	8,900
Bottom 50 per cent.	96	7,800	90	7,300
Bottom 10 per cent.	12	5,000	11	4,600
All taxpayers	367	14,800	338	13,700

[1] Income from employment, self-employment and pensions.

Ms Harman: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect on the Treasury revenues in 1993-94, and in a full year, of introducing a child care tax allowance of £50 a week for *(a)* working mothers and *(b)* either partner in a two-earner couple, assuming that relief is available at the basic rate only, giving figures separately for (i) all families with dependent children and (ii) families with at least one child under five years.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 February 1993]*: Estimates of the full year cost of introducing such an allowance in 1993-94 are set out in the table. The first year cost would depend on how the measure was implemented.

Cost (£ billion)

	Allowance of £50 per week restricted to basic or lower rate relief and given to	
	(a) working mothers and lone parents	*(b) the higher earner in a two-earner couple*
All families with dependent children[1]	1.4	2.2
Family with at least one child under the age of five	0.5	0.9

[1] Includes dependent children aged 16 to 18

Employee (Definition)

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to clarify the definition of employee in relation to the payment of PAYE in connection with the payment of fees to private companies in lieu of salary.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 4 March 1993]*: We have no plans to do so. Whether an individual is an employee for tax purposes is a question of fact and general law and will depend, therefore, on the circumstances of the particular case.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will take steps to reduce opportunities for tax avoidance by payment of fees to private companies in lieu of salaries for full-time positions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 4 March 1993]*: Tax avoidance arrangements of all kinds are kept under review and appropriate action is taken where necessary.

DEFENCE

Redundancies

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis Royal Navy captains retire on a one-star pension after six years in the rank; what compensation for the loss of this pension increment was allowed for in the current round of redundancies; how many of those made compulsorily redundant at the rank of captain has completed six years in the rank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: In accordance with the current (and long-standing) pay arrangements for Royal Navy officers, Royal Naval captains who attain six years seniority in that rank automatically receive the pay, and thus retire with the pension benefits, related to one star rank in the Army and RAF. Only those captains selected for redundancy who had attained six years seniority would receive redundancy benefits based on the higher pay rates as the redundancy compensation scheme, although it includes a payment to compensate for lost career, does not include specific provision for taking into account future pay or pension increases. In the first phase of the Royal Navy redundancy programme, which covers the period from 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993, none of the captains selected for complusory redundancy will have completed more than six years in the rank by the end of this period. Six captains who applied to be considered and were selected for redundancy will have over six years seniority. In the second phase, which covers the period from 1 April 1993 to 30 November 1993, three of the captains selected for complusory redundancy have completed more than six years in the rank or will have done so by the final date. Five captains who had applied to be considered will also fall into this category.

Bands

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *778*, if the band of the Cheshire Regiment has been deployed as part of the UNPROFOR in Bosnia; if the band of the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment is to be deployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The band of the Cheshire Regiment has deployed to Bosnia but the band of the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment is not due to do so.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *778*, if he will set out the number of fee-paying engagements by each service band in the latest full year for which figures are available; what is the contribution to public funds made, and how it is calculated; and what proportion of fees is retained by the unit concerned.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Details of the number of fee-paying engagements undertaken by each service band are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The contribution to public funds is calculated on a percentage basis dependent on the net earnings each band makes. The remainder of the charge is apportioned between the performers and individual band funds. With regard to the total contribution made to public funds I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 11 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *778*.

Service Pensions

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what entitlement widows of post-service marriages to armed forces personnel have to a widow's pension based on the service of their late husband; and what the position was prior to 1978, and from 1978 to 1987.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The current terms of the armed forces pension scheme include provision for a pension to be awarded to the eligible widow of a service man who marries after leaving the armed forces provided that some part of his service was given on or after 6 April 1978 and that he himself qualified for retired pay or pension. Before that date, widows of post-retirement marriages had no entitlement to a pension.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to extend entitlement to armed service widows' pensions to all widows of armed service personnel, irrespective of whether marriage was contracted before, during or after the period of service.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The armed forces pension scheme already provides pensions for the eligible widows of service personnel leaving the armed forces on or after 6 April 1978 irrespective of whether marriage took place before or after service was completed. There are no plans to backdate these arrangements.

HMS Coventry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current role of HMS Coventry in the Gulf; what arrangement he has made for HMS Coventry to deal with anti-submarine patrols; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: HMS Coventry is currently assigned to the Armilla patrol which is tasked to provide reassurance and protection if necessary to British entitled ships and to operate in support of United Nations sanctions on maritime trade with Iraq. It is not our practice to release more detailed operational information.

2nd Gurkha Rifles

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the distance being flown by 2nd Gurkha Rifles for training at Wainwright in Canada; how many aircraft will be needed for the journey; what consideration was given to sending units from the United Kingdom or Germany instead of part of the Hong Kong garrison; and when a battalion from Hong Kong last went for training in Canada.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is proposed that the 2nd Gurkha Rifles will travel direct from Hong Kong to Edmonton in two chartered aircraft. The distance flown will be approximately 11,500 miles. Consideration was given to sending an infantry battalion from United Kingdom land forces or British Army of the Rhine, but neither command was able to release a battalion due to other commitments, drawdown and reorganisation. There is no record of a Hong Kong battalion previously training in Canada.

Armed Service Personnel

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many armed service personnel went absent without leave last year; and what punishments they received.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There were 2,724 personnel in the Royal Navy and Army reported as absent without leave in 1992 (excluding absences of less than seven days for which no central records are kept). Information in respect of Air Force personnel could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Information on the punishments awarded to personnel of all three services convicted at courts martial or summary proceedings of a charge of unauthorised absence or desertion is gathered on an annual basis, but the details for 1992 are not expected to be available until late April. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State forDefence will write to the hon. Member when the information is available.

Overseas Commitments

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the current overseas commitments demanded of the armed services; and if he will make a statement about the requirement for a defence review.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Britain's armed forces have a number of overseas commitments, which they are well placed to meet. We shall continue to keep these plans, and our defence policy as a whole, under review.

Army Personnel Centre

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *760*, what has been the outcome of the consultation concerning the proposal that an integrated Army personnel centre should be established in Glasgow.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) on 4 March, *Official Report*, column *229*.

RAF Lossiemouth

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on the future of the RAF squadron based at Lossiemouth;

(2) what plans he has for future developments at RAF Lossiemouth.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Currently there are two Buccaneer squadrons, the Jaguar operational conversion unit, an air defence RAF regiment squadron, and a ground defence RAF regiment auxiliary field squadron at RAF Lossiemouth. Two Sea King helicopters also operate out of Lossiemouth in the search and rescue role. At the beginning of next year, we plan to deploy two squadrons of Tornado GR1b to RAF Lossiemouth. In addition, the Tornado weapons conversion unit will move to RAF Lossiemouth from RAF Honnington.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Post Office Services

Dr. Bray: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will introduce legislation to place a statutory duty on the Post Office to continue to offer special concessionary rates of postage for despatching such items as talking books and Braille books to the blind or disabled.

Mr. Leigh: The current concessionary postage facilities for the blind are detailed in section 21 of the inland letter post scheme and section 2 of the overseas letter post scheme. These arrangements appear to work very well and I see no case for further legislation at present.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many sub-post offices have had their opening hours reduced; and what is their location in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Leigh: The information requested is not available. The number of community and restricted hours offices operating in Scotland at the end of each of the last four financial years was as follows:

	Community offices	*Restricted hours offices*
March 1989	236	0
March 1990	287	2
March 1991	314	7
March 1992	340	8

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many new sub-post offices have been opened, and what has been their location in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Leigh: The numbers of new post offices opened in Scotland in the last four financial years are as follows:

	Post offices opened
1988-89	6
1989-90	8
1990-91	6
1991-92	2

The numbers of new post offices opened in earlier years and individual locations could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how many island post offices have closed in Scotland in each year since 1979;

(2) how many post offices have closed in Scotland in each year since 1979;

(3) how many rural sub-post offices have closed in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Leigh: The numbers of post offices closed in Scotland in each of the last four financial years are as follows:

	Post offices closed
1988-89	21
1989-90	19
1990-91	32
1991-92	12

Many of these closures were in rural areas where, due to the decline in the number of village shops, it has not been possible to find suitable candidates for sub-postmasterships. The number of post office closures in earlier years and a breakdown of information by rural or island areas could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many sub-post postmasters and sub-post mistresses have been employed in Scotland in each year since 1979.

Mr. Leigh: Data are not available for the numbers of sub-postmasters and sub-postmistresses employed in Scotland since some hold more than one sub-post office.

The total number of sub-post offices in Scotland at the end of each of the last four financial years was as follows:

	Number
1988-89	1,999
1989-90	2,019
1990-91	2,022
1991-92	2,046

The net increase is the result of the Crown Office conversion programme.

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recourse or protection is available against a person who, contrary to the repeatedly expressed wishes of the recipient, persists in sending letters to that recipient through the Royal Mail.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* Subject to certain statutory prohibitions, the Post Office has a duty to deliver all mail as addressed. It is, of course, open to an individual to seek an injunction against a persistent sender of unwelcome mail. Persons who do not wish to receive unsolicited mail can register with the mailing preference service, which covers some 90 per cent. of direct marketing firms, to have their names removed from mailing lists.

Advanced Technology Research

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on Government support for private sector advanced technological research.

Mr. Leigh: The Government encourage the private sector to carry out additional technological research through a number of collaborative Research and Development schemes eg the Government-wide LINK scheme and DTI's advanced technology programmes.

There are also DTI schemes specifically designed to meet the needs of smaller companies, such as SMART (small firms merit award for research and technology) and SPUR (support for products under research), both of which provide single company research and development support.

Furniture Safety

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to publicise the new regulations relating to the sale of non-compliant second-hand foam furniture.

Mr. Leigh: My Department published, in August 1991, "A Guide to the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations" which explains the main requirements of the regulations in some detail and sets out the dates when they come into force. This guide, which was prepared in consultation with the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards and the Institute of Trading Standards Administrations, is to assist suppliers of domestic upholstered funiture. It is provided free of charge, and, to date, 50,000 copies have been distributed by my Department and trading standards officers throughout the country. My Department has also issued a separate guide for consumers—"Making Furniture Safer" —some 80,000 copies of which have been distributed.

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will place in the Library details of advice notes given to *(a)* trading standards officers, *(b)* charities or voluntary organisations and *(c)* businesses in regard to foam-filled furniture in respect of (i) warning labels, (ii) information on non-compliant foam and (iii) proof of purchase of smoke alarms.

Mr. Leigh: The Department has expressed the view to the Local Authorities Co-ordinating Body on Trading Standards that the simple distribution of secondhand furniture by a charity in pursuance of its charitable objectives to needy persons, either free of charge or at a nominal cost only, would be unlikely to constitute a supply in the course of business within the meaning of the legislation.

My Department has also given guidance to charities in accordance with the above, but has recommended that individual charities should seek separate legal advice in the light of their particular circumstances.

Copies of the guidance given to charities, together with the guidance booklets on the requirements of the Furniture and Furnishings (Safety) Regulations will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made on the European directive relating to flammability of furniture.

Mr. Leigh: The European Commission announced, in May 1991, the suspension of work on an EC directive on the fire behaviour of upholstered furniture pending research to establish a scientific basis for the development of test methods on burning behaviour. This research is now under way and is expected to be completed in 1994.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the quantities of second-hand furniture sold by shops, auctions and car boot sales which will have to go to landfill as a result of the implementation of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) (Amendments) Regulations 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 23 February 1993]:* The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, as amended, allowed a period of five years for suppliers of second-hand upholstered furniture to prepare for the application of the fire resistance requirements to this furniture, and to adjust stocks of non-complying furniture accordingly. No information is available as to the quantity of second-hand furniture which will have to go to landfill.

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will provide a list of the auditing guidelines formulated by the Auditing Practices Committee after his Department acquired a non-voting representation on it.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department was represented on the former Auditing Practices Committee by a non-voting member from May 1987 until the Committee was dissolved in 1991. The auditing guidelines developed by the Committee and issued after May 1987 were as follows:

	Date
Applicability to the public sector of Auditing Standards and Guidelines	July 1987
The impact of regulations on public sector audits	March 1988
Analytical review	April 1988
Pension schemes in the United Kingdom	November 1988
Banks in the United Kingdom	March 1989
Building Societies in the United Kingdom	March 1989
Reports by auditors under company legislation in the United Kingdom	June 1989
—revised version	February 1991
Reports by auditors under company legislation in the Republic of Ireland	June 1989
Audit reports and information on the effects of changing prices	October 1989
The auditor's responsibility in relation to fraud, other irregularities and errors	February 1990
Guidance for internal auditors	June 1990
Communications between auditors and Regulators under sections 109 and 180(1)(q) of the Financial Services Act 1986	July 1990
General business insurers in the United Kingdom	March 1991
The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement	May 1991
Life insurers in the United Kingdom	October 1991

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the dates of the meetings of the Auditing Practices Board which his representative has attended.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: My Department's representative attended the meetings of the Auditing Practices Board held on the following dates:

1991
3 July
9 September
15 October
3 December

1992
14 January
11 February
10 March
13 April
19 May
30 June
28 July
8 September
25 September
15 October
24 November

1993
12 January
9 February

Supervisory Bodies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to propose legislation under which members of the general public would have access to the minutes of the meetings of the councils of the recognised supervisory bodies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such plans.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to replace the five recognised accountancy supervisory bodies with a single body.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no plans to revoke the recognition of the supervisory bodies recognised under part II of the Companies Act 1989.

Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to adopt a policy under which his Department's report published under section 729 of the Companies Act 1989, will show the business connections of the inspectors appointed during that year.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I take it that the reference should be to the Companies Act 1985. My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many times since 1979 any individual criticised in an inspectors' report has acted as an inspector for his Department.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Once. In 1977 inspectors were appointed to investigate the affairs of Gilgate Holdings Limited and they submitted their final report on 8 April 1991. The accountant inspector was subsequently criticised in a report on Ramor Investments Limited, published in 1983.

Company Returns

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what proposals he has to modify the contents of the annual returns filed by companies with the Registrar of Companies;

(2) how many times in 1989, 1990 and 1991, companies have filed a statement in respect of auditor removal in respect of section 391(2) of the Companies Act 1985;

(3) how many companies failed to file an annual return in each year since 1985.

Mr. Hamilton: These are matters for Companies house. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from D. Durham to Mr. Austin Mitchell, dated 4 March 1993.

You tabled three Parliamentary Questions on 1 March, concerning matters which are my responsibility as Registrar of Companies. The questions concerned proposals for modifying the annual returns provided by companies; the number of companies which have failed to file such returns since 1985; and the number of times in 1989, 1990 and 1991 that auditors were removed under S391(2) of the Companies Act 1985. I will answer the points *seriatim*.

We have at the present time no specific proposals to modify the annual return. As I explained in my letter of 22 February 1993 in answer to your previous Parliamentary Question, about checks made on annual returns, we now have a "shuttle" annual return form. The information it contains is mostly pre-printed by Companies House, and a company either confirms the information or amends the details as necessary. The "shuttle" systems is relatively new, and as we and companies gain greater experience in using it, we may wish to propose changes if they appear necessary or desirable. However, the annual return is prescribed by regulations, and any changes would, of course, require Parliamentary approval.

Turning to your second question, the figures you require on the number of companies failing to file an annual return are as follows:—

	Number
1985	266,000
1986	93,000
1987	93,000
1988	103,000
1989	126,000
1990	100,000
1991	138,000
1992	101,000

These figures are calculated up to the end of June in each year: those for 1985, 1986 and 1987 relate to England and Wales only. All the figures have been derived from the number of companies in default for an annual return, in relation to the number of companies assumed to be active.

Your final question was about removal of auditors. The figures are as follows:

	Number
1989	596
1990	665
1991	2,507

These are calendar year figures, and relate to Great Britain.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what actions he takes after referring the criticisms of auditors in his Department's inspectors' reports to the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As a recognised supervisory body, the ICAEW is responsible for taking any disciplinary or regulatory action against an auditor registered with it. The institute keeps my Department informed of the progress in considering relevant information in inspectors' reports.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 November 1992, *Official Report*, column 310, how many of the accountancy firms listed by him currently act as auditors to public bodies sponsored by his Department.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Two of the accountancy firms listed in the previous answer currently act as auditors to public bodies sponsored by my Department—Coopers and Lybrand, and Ernst and Young.

J. S. Bass plc (Liquidation)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will institute a DTI inquiry into the conduct of the liquidation of J. S. Bass plc in Manchester.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No.

British Goods

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department is taking to identify areas where customer demand at home and abroad cannot be satisfied by British goods; and how he intends to encourage production to move into these areas.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department is continually working to assist United Kingdom firms to identify market opportunities both at home and abroad. It also aims, to help businesses take full advantage of these by stimulating enterprise and innovation and encouraging best practice in quality, design and management.

Transfer Pricing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to require all multinational companies to disclose their transfer pricing policies in notes to their annual accounts.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: None.

Company Receivers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers he has to examine the fees paid to company receivers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Secretary of State does not have powers to examine the fees paid to company receivers.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much money in 1993 values has been received from the European regional development fund in each year since 1984.

Mr. Sainsbury: European regional development fund allocations to the United Kingdom since 1984 have been as follows:

	1993 prices £ million
1984	555
1985	492
1986	464
1987	583

	1993 prices £ million
1988	469
1989	411
1990	381
1991	454
1992	501
1993	693

Structural Funds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 17 February to the hon. Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Coe), *Official Report*, column *269*, what parishes, districts and counties within Wales fall within the definition of rural Wales for the purposes of grants from structural funds.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Under the current structural funds regulations, the area covered by the objective 5(b) programme known as Rural Wales includes the whole of the three counties of Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys with the exception of the Llanelli travel-to-work area; those parts of the Swansea, Aberdare and Blaenau Gwent (formerly Ebbw Vale) and Abergavenny travel-to-work areas in Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys; and that part of the Conwy and Colwyn travel-to-work area in Gwynedd.

Article 8(1) of Regulation (EEC) 2052/88 requires that objective 1 regions shall be regions at NUTS II level. The NUTS II level region of rural Wales comprises the entire counties of Clwyd, Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys. It is in respect of this region that the Government continue to press the case for objective 1.

Coal Task Force

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he received the report from the coal task force on the United Kingdom's future coal research requirements; and what conclusions he has reached regarding its contents.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* The coal task force report on the United Kingdom's future coal research requirements was received by the then Secretary of State for Energy in July 1991. The subject of clean coal technology is currently being considered within the context of the coal review.

Gulf Co-operation Council (Market Share)

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the market share held by *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France, *(c)* Germany, *(d)* China, *(e)* Japan, *(f)* Italy and *(g)* the United States of America in each country of the Gulf Co-operation Council in each year since 1979.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* The information requested is in the tables:

Percentage shares of total imports[1] of Gulf co-operation council countries analysed by exporting country 1979-91

Year	UK per cent.	France per cent.	Germany per cent.	Italy per cent.	USA per cent.	Japan per cent.	China per cent.
Bahrain							
1979	8·7	2·0	2·7	2·1	8·1	6·8	0·6
1980	6·9	1·4	1·5	1·3	7·6	7·5	0·5
1981	6·0	1·1	1·6	1·2	8·9	6·2	0·5
1982	7·2	1·7	3·4	1·6	10·4	7·8	0·5
1983	8·4	2·4	4·9	3·9	7·0	12·7	0·5
1984	7·3	1·4	3·2	6·3	7·4	9·9	0·4
1985	7·3	1·4	3·2	6·3	7·4	9·9	0·4
1986	7·3	1·4	3·2	6·3	7·4	9·9	0·4
1987	7·3	1·4	3·2	6·3	7·4	9·9	0·4
1988	7·3	1·4	3·2	6·3	7·4	9·9	0·4
1989	7·3	1·4	3·2	6·3	7·4	9·9	0·4
1990	6·3	1·5	2·5	4·0	18·5	6·7	0·3
1991	7·3	3·9	4·1	2·7	14·0	4·6	0·3
Saudi Arabia							
1979	7·1	4·6	11·0	7·4	19·8	15·8	0·6
1980	6·5	5·4	9·1	7·3	20·0	17·9	0·8
1981	6·2	5·7	9·5	6·7	21·4	18·3	0·7
1982	6·6	5·3	11·0	6·1	21·0	19·1	0·6
1983	6·2	5·3	9·9	7·5	19·7	19·5	0·6
1984	5·8	7·8	8·3	7·2	17·4	19·8	0·6
1985	6·2	5·1	8·4	7·8	17·0	19·0	0·9
1986	7·3	5·6	8·1	7·3	17·5	15·7	1·2
1987	7·8	5·3	7·7	6·8	15·3	17·3	1·6
1988	7·3	5·2	7·2	6·5	16·2	16·0	1·8
1989	10·2	4·3	6·3	5·7	18·2	14·2	1·9
1990	11·3	4·0	7·4	4·6	16·7	15·3	1·8
1991	11·3	4·0	7·8	4·6	20·2	13·7	2·2
Oman							
1979	16·8	3·6	6·3	2·2	8·0	15·4	1·2
1980	15·6	1·9	5·6	1·8	5·7	19·7	1·0
1981	14·5	2·4	4·3	1·9	7·8	22·6	0·7
1982	14·4	3·3	8·3	1·7	8·0	20·7	0·7
1983	18·6	2·1	7·3	2·1	7·7	22·0	0·5
1984	16·6	2·9	9·5	2·3	7·6	21·3	0·5
1985	16·4	3·7	7·8	3·0	5·7	20·2	0·3

Year	UK per cent.	France per cent.	Germany per cent.	Italy per cent.	USA per cent.	Japan per cent.	China per cent.
1986	16·8	3·3	8·4	3·1	7·1	13·5	0·4
1987	13·7	3·3	7·5	2·3	6·2	14·2	0·4
1988	13·3	3·5	5·2	4·1	8·8	16·8	0·4
1989	11·7	3·3	5·5	2·1	8·5	15·7	0·5
1990	11·3	4·2	4·8	1·6	9·2	16·7	0·4
1991	14·0	3·4	5·5	2·5	6·8	20·4	0·3
Qatar							
1979	15·5	10·0	16·8	5·8	8·7	18·6	1·3
1980	17·7	5·4	6·1	5·3	11·3	18·3	1·5
1981	16·5	6·0	7·2	4·8	11·1	20·5	0·9
1982	16·2	9·8	7·2	4·7	9·0	22·0	0·8
1983	16·7	4·9	8·2	5·0	9·1	21·8	0·7
1984	14·6	5·4	7·2	4·8	9·1	19·2	1·0
1985	16·3	7·6	8·7	4·9	6·5	18·2	0·5
1986	16·5	5·1	9·6	5·3	5·9	17·0	0·6
1987	16·0	4·3	7·2	4·9	11·9	16·3	1·2
1988	13·8	4·0	7·9	4·3	9·3	17·6	0·9
1989	11·6	4·7	7·3	7·8	8·8	18·8	1·0
1990	14·5	4·7	7·7	9·4	9·5	14·6	1·0
1991	11·8	5·2	8·5	5·6	11·6	13·6	1·3
Kuwait							
1979	10·0	3·4	8·0	5·6	14·4	18·3	2·5
1980	8·6	3·9	8·6	5·6	14·5	21·0	2·2
1981	7·8	3·5	12·0	5·8	14·0	22·7	2·0
1982	7·0	3·6	14·0	6·0	12·7	24·1	1·6
1983	7·2	5·8	10·5	6·4	11·1	25·7	1·8
1984	6·3	8·6	8·7	6·5	9·4	23·8	1·6
1985	7·3	3·7	10·2	6·0	8·8	27·1	1·6
1986	6·2	4·0	9·3	5·3	11·9	22·9	1·6
1987	6·7	3·9	7·7	4·9	10·1	18·8	2·1
1988	6·0	3·1	7·6	4·6	12·1	13·3	3·0
1989	6·5	3·3	7·9	5·3	13·0	12·7	3·4
1990	8·4	3·5	8·9	6·1	10·9	11·3	1·8
1991	7·3	2·6	6·5	0·0	29·0	10·3	0·5
United Arab Emirates							
1979	15·9	5·0	7·8	4·1	13·1	16·8	1·6
1980	14·3	6·0	5·8	4·8	13·5	17·3	1·6
1981	11·7	5·5	6·7	4·3	14·4	18·5	1·6
1982	11·7	6·6	8·6	4·7	13·5	18·6	1·4
1983	10·3	5·4	7·2	5·2	12·4	19·4	1·7
1984	9·9	4·6	6·7	7·1	12·1	17·8	1·6
1985	11·1	4·4	7·2	5·3	11·0	20·0	1·8
1986	11·2	5·3	8·6	4·6	9·7	18·3	2·2
1987	10·6	4·3	9·0	4·3	8·4	18·0	2·9
1988	9·7	3·4	7·1	4·5	9·5	16·4	3·3
1989	9·4	3·7	7·6	4·7	9·7	15·0	2·9
1990	10·0	3·6	7·6	4·6	9·1	14·2	5·0
1991	8·9	4·6	6·8	4·2	9·7	14·3	2·7

[1] Total visible imports.

Source: IMF Direction of Trade.

SCOTLAND

Community Care

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements are being made to ensure that moneys raised within the area of the Highland health board through the sale of Craig Dunain hospital are re-invested in community care in the health board area.

Mr. Stewart: Health boards and NHS trusts are allowed to retain the full receipts from the disposal of surplus property, to invest in developments which improve patient care within their area. Community based developments to replace any long-stay institution will be required before it is closed and will be funded from a number of sources including the normal health service capital programme and local authorities.

Made in Scotland

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his Department's annual expenditure on Made in Scotland, Beauly; and for how many years this is planned to continue.

Mr. Lang: There is no direct Scottish Office expenditure on Made in Scotland Ltd. The company was established in 1991 with assistance from Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise, on the basis that it would be required to become commercially self-supporting within a given period. The terms of the assistance are a matter between the company and the enterprise bodies.

Women's Aid

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when 1993-94 provision for Scottish Women's Aid will be decided under section 9 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Mr. Stewart: Scottish Women's Aid was advised of its 1993-94 provision in a letter issued on 1 March 1993.

Continuing Care Beds

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many continuing care beds for elderly patients there were in NHS hospitals in each of the last five years; and what projected figures he has for the future.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested for each of the last five years is shown in the following table. Health boards are constantly reviewing their assessment of need, consequently projected figures are not available.

NHS average available staffed beds: Geriatric long-stay and psychogeriatrics Years ending 31 March 1988 to 31 March 1992

Year	Total	Geriatric Long-stay	Psychogeriatrics
1988	13,728	8,535	5,193
1989	14,857	8,896	5,961
1990	14,794	8,880	5,914
1991	14,715	8,727	5,988
1992	15,214	8,522	6,692

Crafts

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was his Department's annual expenditure on the craft section of Scottish development agency and Highlands and Islands development board in the year before their abolition.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure by the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board in 1990-91 was £377,000 and £569,000 respectively. These figures exclude any management and administration expenditure incurred by these bodies, and financial assistance to crafts made available by HIDB other than through Craftpoint, which cannot be separately identified.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what proposals he has for the administrative relationship between Made in Scotland and the Crafts Council and the Scottish Art Council;

(2) what will be the administrative base for decisions concerning the crafts within the Scottish Arts Council;

(3) what is to be the administrative relationship between the Crafts Council and the Scottish Arts Council in terms of *(a)* the establishment of priorities and *(b)* the allocation and distribution of grants to crafts people and craft operators.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland announced on 1 February 1993 (*Official Report*, column *37*) his intention to establish new arrangements for the support of crafts in Scotland. The details of these arrangements are still under consideration and a further announcement will be made in due course.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the annual Scottish Office expenditure of the craft section of the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board in the three years immediately prior to the winding up of both organisations.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* The expenditure by the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board was as follows:

Scottish Development Agency

	£000
1988-89	303
1989-90	315
1990-91	377

The figures exclude any management and administration expenditure incurred, which could not be identified without incurring disproportionate cost.

Highlands and Islands Development Board

	£000
1988-89	230
1989-90	495
1990-91	569

The figures exclude any management and administration expenditure incurred by HIDB, and financial assistance to crafts made available through other than Craftpoint, which cannot be separately identified.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the annual expenditure of the Scottish Office on Made in Scotland, Beauly, in each of the past three years; and what it will be for each of the next three years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* Made in Scotland Ltd. was only established in 1991. The company has received no direct support from the Scottish Office; but was formed with assistance from Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise on the basis of the support it would provide for the marketing and promotion of the crafts industry in Scotland. The terms of the assistance are a matter between the company and the enterprise bodies.

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is to be the administrative relationship between the Crafts Council and the Scottish Arts Council in establishing priorities, deciding on allocation and dispersing grants to craftspeople and craft operations in Scotland;

(2) what will be the administrative base for craft discussions within the Scottish Arts Council;

(3) what is the administrative relationship between Made in Scotland and the Crafts Council/Scottish Arts Council administering the new money.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* I announced on 1 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *37*, my intention to establish "new arrangements" for the support of the crafts sector in Scotland. The details of these arrangements are still under consideration and I will make a further announcement in due course.

Extraction of Minerals

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *562*, if he will give the amounts received by the Forestry Commission from licences and leases for permitting the extraction of minerals in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The information is given in the table. Detailed records are available only for the last four years; the amounts for the first six years are therefore based on estimates.

Year ended 31 March	*£ million*
1983	[1]0·3
1984	[1]0·3
1985	[1]0·4
1986	[1]0·4
1987	[1]0·5
1988	0·5
1989	0·6
1990	0·7
1991	0·9
1992	0·8

[1] Estimate.

Obscenity Law

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what representations he has had from groups and individuals about the law in relation to obscene, violent and pornographic material; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has had from groups and individuals calling for Government action to review the law in relation to obscene, violent and pornographic material; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* We receive occasional representations both from groups and individuals about the law concerning such material. Current legislation on this matter is kept under constant review. The Government are supporting the Video Recordings (Amendment) Bill introduced in another place, which aims to improve the enforcement of the Video Recordings Act 1984.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the numbers of convictions of offences relating to obscene, violent and pornographic publications each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Information is not available in the form requested. The table shows the number of persons with a main charge proved of handling obscene material.

	Persons with a charge proved
1979	24
1980	16
1981	8
1982	8
1983	15
1984	21
1985	19
1986	18
1987	20
1988	17
1989	14
1990	13
1991	8

Nimmo Smith/Friel Report

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the individuals and groups who have made representations to him following the publication of the Nimmo Smith/Friel report.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend has received two representations, one from me on behalf of a constituent, and one from a member of the public in Fife.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultation he has had with representatives of the children's panel on the way to deal with persistent juvenile offenders aged between 12 and 15 years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Officials of the Scottish Office meet representatives of the children's panels regularly to discuss issues affecting children who are referred to reporters on offence and non-offence grounds. In addition there is a children's hearings representative group which meets twice a year under the chairmanship of a Scottish Office official.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the maximum custodial sentence available to the courts for a persistent juvenile offender aged *(a)* 14 years and *(b)* 17 years in (i) 1979 and (ii) 1992.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The term "persistent juvenile offender" is not legally defined but there is a range of sentences—custodial and non-custodial—available to the courts for a 14 or 17-year-old convicted on indictment. The maximum custodial sentence available for both these age groups for the most serious crimes—including murder where the sentence is mandatory—is detention without limit of time.

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many juveniles have been convicted of offences involving the carrying or using of knives in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* June 1991 to July 1992.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Information is held centrally only on the numbers of persons with a main charge proved of possession of an offensive weapon under the Prevention of Crime Act 1953. The number of persons aged less than 16 years and the number of 16 and 17-year-olds with a main charge proved of possession of an offensive weapon are shown in the table. The information relates to 1990 and 1991, the latest years for which data are available.

Age	*1990*	*1991*
Less than 16 years	2	2
17 and 17-year-olds	202	181

Prison Education

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the expenditure on education within Scottish prisons including staff costs each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The expenditure on education in Scottish prisons since 1979 is as follows:

£000

Year	Amount
1979-80	203
1980-81	228
1981-82	447
1982-83	411
1983-84	622
1984-85	608
1985-86	822
1986-87	716
1987-88	697
1988-89	723
1989-90	967
1990-91	1,230
1991-92	1,309
1992-93	1,525

Stabbings

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many assaults with a knife or similar weapon resulted in either a serious injury or death in each police force area since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* The available information is provided in the tables. Figures for patients dealt with as outpatients are not available.

Number of persons recorded by the police in Scotland who were killed with a knife or other sharp instrument by police force area, 1979-1991

Police Force	Number killed
Northern	19
Grampian	21
Tayside	22
Fife	16
Lothian and Borders	65
Central	9
Strathclyde	327
Dumfries and Galloway	8
Total	487

In-patient discharges from Scottish hospitals with a diagnosis of injury (excluding death) resulting from an assault by a cutting or piercing instrument for each health board of treatment, 1979-1991

Health board of treatment	Number
Argyll and Clyde	933
Ayrshire and Annan	395
Borders	37
Dumfries and Galloway	58
Fife	158
Forth Valley	210
Grampian	466
Greater Glasgow	4,072
Highland	123
Lanarkshire	639
Lothian	1,098
Orkney	4
Shetland	9
Tayside	314
Western Isles	2
Scotland	8,518

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many police officers in each police force area have been wounded or murdered by stabbing with a knife or similar weapon in each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* Since 1979 one police officer in Scotland has been murdered by stabbing, in Strathclyde police area in 1982. Information recorded by forces on the number of police officers wounded by stabbing is set out in the following table.

	Central	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Lothian and Borders	Northern	Strathclyde	Tayside
1979	—	—	—	N/a	N/a	—	N/a	N/a
1980	—	—	—	N/a	N/a	—	N/a	N/a
1981	—	—	—	N/a	N/a	—	N/a	N/a
1982	—	—	—	1	—	2	N/a	N/a
1983	—	—	—	1	—	—	N/a	N/a
1984	—	—	—	1	—	—	N/a	N/a
1985	—	—	—	—	2	—	N/a	N/a
1986	—	—	—	—	4	—	N/a	N/a
1987	—	—	—	1	1	—	N/a	N/a
1988	—	—	—	3	1	—	N/a	N/a
1989	—	—	—	—	3	—	N/a	N/a
1990	—	—	—	—	2	—	N/a	N/a
1991	—	—	—	2	—	—	N/a	N/a
1992	—	1	—	—	2	—	N/a	N/a
1993	—	—	—	—	—	—	N/a	N/a

N/a—Details not available.

Prevention of Terrorism Acts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were *(a)* arrested or *(b)* stopped and questioned under the terms of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in 1990.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 March 1993]*: The information sought by the hon. Member is set out in the report on the operation in 1990 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 by Viscount Colville of Culross QC, published on 21 February 1991, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Lilley and Company

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations have been made to him by the management and receivers of Lilley and Company relating to the London rules and the unanimity rule among banks.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 19 January 1993]*: My right hon. Friend has not received any such representations.

Drug Offences

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the value of *(a)* money and *(b)* assets that have been confiscated from persons convicted by courts in (i) Strathclyde and (ii) Scotland as a whole for drug offences in each of the past four years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 17 February 1993]*: On conviction in drug trafficking cases the court may, in addition to imposing a sentence of imprisonment, impose a fine, order the forfeiture of specific assets (including drugs, cash and vehicles) and, in the case of the High Court, make a confiscation order. A confiscation order is an order to pay a sum of money and does not relate to specific assets, although specific assets may be realised to enforce it. Forfeiture is extensively ordered by the courts in drug trafficking cases, but figures are not available in the form sought. Confiscation orders were made by the High Court in each of the last four years as follows:

	Strathclyde £	*Scotland* £
1989	15,000	26,795·70
1990	Nil	Nil
1991	Nil	83,963·38
1992	17,490·36	17,490·36

Nurses

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many qualified nursing staff were employed in each health board in each year since 1989.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 February 1993]*: The information requested is given in the table:

NHS qualified nursing staff by health board.
Number and whole time equivalent (WTE) as at 30 September.

	1989		*1990*		*1991*		*1992*[1]	
Health Board	*Number*	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*	*Number*	*WTE*
Scotland	42,170	36,221	42,459	36,258	43,011	36,449	43,125	36,300
Argyll and Clyde	2,996	2,524	3,055	2,575	3,159	2,658	3,206	2,678
Ayrshire and Arran	2,348	2,033	2,394	2,075	2,493	2,164	2,433	2,115
Borders	817	705	799	681	791	672	830	700
Dumfries and Galloway	1,289	1,068	1,310	1,091	1,336	1,109	1,338	1,105
Fife	2,377	2,066	2,436	2,114	2,497	2,159	2,516	2,153
Forth Valley	2,181	1,838	2,294	1,917	2,338	1,920	2,475	1,995
Grampian	4,427	3,526	4,566	3,575	4,586	3,554	4,704	3,611
Greater Glasgow	9,351	8,296	9,042	7,972	8,850	7,660	8,643	7,463
Highland	1,763	1,490	1,809	1,520	1,831	1,548	1,842	1,536
Lanarkshire	3,886	3,314	3,954	3,364	3,970	3,380	3,810	3,233
Lothian	6,073	5,341	5,979	5,248	6,053	5,227	6,081	5,197
Orkney	165	145	175	153	184	159	188	162
Shetland	172	152	175	155	192	172	186	167
Tayside	3,991	3,454	4,117	3,556	4,128	3,551	4,242	3,644
Western Isles	265	207	285	203	284	207	299	220
CSA	69	62	69	60	53	47	58	50
State hospital[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	266	263	274	271

[1] Data for September 1992 are provisional.
[2] Data for State hospital did not become available until September 1991.

Prescription Charges

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many claimants of disability working allowance are also in receipt of exemption from prescription charges by reason of *(a)* low income and *(b)* prescribed illness or condition;

(2) what is his estimate of the number and types of eligible persons who fail to claim exemption from prescription charges.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 February 1993]*: The requested information is not available. However, we believe that the figures are comparable with those in England and Wales and I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him today by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Health.

European Time

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the net extra numbers and categories, of people who would avoid injury due to road

accidents if Scotland adopted common European time; and if he will summarise the considerations that will influence his policy on Scotland's time zone.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* Estimates based on figures for Strathclyde published by the Transport Research Laboratory in 1989, updated to take account of 1991 casualty data and extended to the whole of Scotland using the results from the study of the BST experiment in 1969-70 indicate an estimated saving of five fatalities, 23 serious and 256 slight injury casualties. No breakdown of these figures by road user category is available but it is thought that pedestrians would be the largest group to benefit. These estimates do not take into account any possible increase in casualties which might result from additional activity in lighter evenings.

Given Scotland's particular geographical position, we wish to give the most careful consideration to the views of various sectors of the community and public generally on any proposals to change the present summer time arrangements.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made following the further consultation exercise in respect of the setting up of a proposed register of land which may be contaminated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 23 February 1993]:* Good progress has been made in the further consideration of the proposals for registers of land which may be contaminated. An announcement will be made shortly.

SCOTLAND

Tenants' Rights

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the instructions and guidance he has given to Scottish Homes about the way to handle cases where local authority or Scottish Homes tenants have been the subject of compulsory purchase orders and have lost their tenant's right to buy.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* I have given no such guidance to Scottish Homes, which has no formal responsibility in such cases apart from the involvement it would have as landlord if one of its houses were subject to compulsory purchase. A Scottish Homes or local authority tenant whose house was subject to compulsory purchase would only lose his right to buy if he declined to accept an alternative tenancy which would normally be offered by the landlord or another public sector landlord.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people whose homes were owned by local authorities or by Scottish Homes have been the subject of a compulsory purchase order which has resulted in the tenant losing the statutory right to buy in each of the last 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will specify the statutory powers which give tenants of local authority or Scottish Homes domestic properties the right to financial compensation in lieu of the loss of tenant rights.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Where a short tenancy (that is, a tenancy the duration of which is no greater than a year, and runs from year to year) has been terminated early, the provisions of section 114 of the Land Clauses Consolidation (Scotland) Act 1845 apply in respect of the payment of compensation for early termination of the lease.

NHS Premises (Access)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the rights of access to national health service premises of *(a)* blind patients with guide dogs and *(b)* patients who suffer from other physical disabilities; and what guidance he has issued or proposes to issue on this question of access.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 February 1993]:* The Government's policy is that suitable access and facilities should be provided for disabled people who have problems of mobility or orientation. This includes those who are wheelchair bound and those who are blind. Such measures are inevitably constrained by practical considerations; eg in relation to the adaptability of existing accommodation. It covers patients, staff and visitors. This policy is reflected in general and specific terms in the hospital planning guidance notes prepared by the Management Executive and published by HMSO.

Training

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give, in 1992-93 prices and cash terms, the total amount spent of the budget for training for Scotland in each year since 1989-90, the expected outturn in 1992-93 and plans for 1993-94.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 24 February 1993]:* Training expenditure in Scotland was not recorded separately in the years prior to 1991-92. Since then, resources have been made available as part of the grant-in-aid of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to support the training programmes administered by these bodies. The following table provides details:

£ million

	1991-92 (outturn)	*1992-93 (estimated outturn)*	*1993-94[1] (plans)*
Cash	227·985	216·451	195·650
1992-93 prices	237·674	216·451	190·413

[1] The approved estimate for 1993-94 is expected to include additional provision of up to £4 million.

Unemployment

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will provide details from the 1991 census of the numbers unemployed as a proportion of the economically active population in each ward making up the Cunninghame, North constituency.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* The figures are given in the table.

Unemployed as a percentage of the economically active population

Ward	*Per cent.*
Ardrossan North	12·4
Ardrossan South	16·8
Arran	8·3
Beith	9·6
Dalry	10·5
Fairlie, Skelmorlie and Cumbrae	7·8
Garnock East	8·3
Kilbirnie North	13·6
Kilbirnie South	14·8
Largs North	9·5
Largs South	9·0
Saltcoats East	20·2
Saltcoats North	17·0
South Beach	11·9
West Kilbride	10·4
All wards in constituency	11·7

Note: The areal definition of ward used for census output involves some approximation but it is thought unlikely that this would have a significant effect on the figures.

Archaeological Sites

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment his Department and Historic Scotland have made of the effect of extreme weather conditions in January on archaeological sites in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* Inspectors from Historic Scotland have visited a selection of sites damaged by the January storms on Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles. The Orkney Islands archaeologist is conducting detailed inspection of damage to sites in Orkney with financial support from Historic Scotland. Historic Scotland will fund at least one small excavation at Tuquoy in Orkney, to follow up damage in January to a site on which excavations were undertaken in advance of coastal erosion which took place up to 1988. Historic Scotland also plans further assessment at the Brough of Birsay as a consequence of storm damage. Sampling is being arranged at one damaged site in the Western Isles; other sites visited by an inspector following storm damage had been sampled previously and no systematic survey is planned. No request has been received to date from the Shetland Islands archaeologist for emergency assessment of sites following the January storms. No systematic survey is planned but Historic Scotland inspectors will shortly be carrying out a further inspection. Assessment of the effects of pollution from oil spilled from the Braer wreck on Jarlshof and neighbouring sites has already commenced. No reports have been received of damage to archaeological sites elsewhere in Scotland from the extreme weather conditions in January.

Ecological Steering Group

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the budgetary arrangements for the ecological steering groups referred to in his statement of 11 January, *Official Report*, column 626.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* The sum of £20,000 has been made available to support the ecological steering group in this financial year, and adequate provision will be made for 1993-94. I expect that its work will largely be founded on investigations carried out, or to be carried out, by other bodies, but if it should become clear that further funding is needed the Government will respond appropriately.

Arbroath Infirmary

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what reductions Tayside health board intend to make on X-ray facilities at Arbroath infirmary.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* Tayside health board currently has no plans to change X-ray facilities at Arbroath infirmary. The board is undertaking public consultation on its proposal to withdraw specialist general medical services from the Infirmary and, in their place, develop a GP-led service. If that proposal goes ahead the board will review, with the GPs, the level of X-ray facilities required.

Casualty Services

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what finance and other resources are currently made available to general practitioner-provided casualty services by hospitals in each health board.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* The information is not held centrally.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what limitations are imposed on general practitioner hospital casualty services; and how these are regulated.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* The scope of the casualty service provided by general practitioners is a matter for health boards and individual practitioners. In each case, clinical judgment will determine whether a patient should be treated by the general practitioner or referred to a larger hospital or a specialist. Where necessary, referral protocols can be agreed between GPs and the hospitals with which they regularly deal.

Out-patient Clinics, Angus

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which specialist out-patient clinics are currently being proposed by Tayside health board at each Angus hospital; and which they propose to end.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* Specialist out-patient clinics currently held at each Angus hospital are set out in the table. Tayside health board has no plans to change these.

Stracathro
- Surgical/Urology
- Neurosurgery
- Orthopaedic
- Ophthalmology
- Diabetes
- Medical
- Dermatology
- Paediatrics
- Geriatrics

Brechin Infirmary
- Gynaecology
- Ante-natal
- Surgical
- Ophthalmology
- Diabetes
- Medical
- Plastic Surgery

Orthopaedic
ENT
Psychiatry

Montrose Infirmary
Gynaecology
Ante-natal
Surgical
Ophthalmology
Orthoptic
Medical
Chest Medicine
Dermatology
Orthopaedic
ENT
Psychiatry

Arbroath Infirmary
Gynaecology
Ante-natal
Surgical
Neurology
Orthoptic
Diabetes
Medical
Dermatology
Chest Medicine
Rheumatology
Orthopaedic
ENT
Psychiatry
Paediatric
Psychiatry of Old Age

Forfar Infirmary
Gynaecology
Surgical
Medical
Chest Medicine
Dermatology
Rheumatology
Orthopaedics
ENT
Psychiatry of Old Age

Fyfe Jamieson
Ante-natal

Community Hospitals

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what payments have been made to general practitioners in respect of community hospitals in each health board in each of the last five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 March 1993]*: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mrs. Donna Bromham

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the circumstances surrounding the death of Mrs. Donna Bromham in Nairn on 19 July 1992; and what alterations have been made to the Scottish road safety vehicle which hit her.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 4 March 1993]*: Mrs. Donna Bromham dies tragically from injuries sustained when she was struck by a loose flap of a road safety display vehicle. The accident happened on 19 July 1992 in the town of Nairn. Mrs. Bromham was on the footpath when the accident occurred. The police reported the matter to the procurator fiscal at Inverness who, after consultation with Crown counsel, took criminal proceedings against the driver on charges of careless driving and use of a vehicle in a dangerous condition. The driver went to trial at Inverness sheriff court and was found not guilty on the first charge but was convicted on the second. He was fined £100 and had his licence endorsed with three penalty points.

The vehicle was held for inspection by Northern Constabulary and released to Highland regional council on 3 August 1992, since when it has not been in use. It will not be permitted on the roads until modifications have been carried out by the regional council, and inspected by the police. The modifications will provide additional security and allow for visual confirmation that the flap is in a safe condition for transportation.

Caesarean Section Births

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many babies were born by Caesarean section in hospitals in Scotland during each year since 1970; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 March 1993]*: The number of recorded deliveries by Caesarean section for the years 1975-92 is given in the table. Comparable information for 1970-74 is not available centrally.

Year	*Number*	*Percentage of total deliveries*
1975	5,627	8·7
1976	6,083	9·4
1977	6,297	10·0
1978	6,930	10·7
1979	7,686	11·3
1980	7,958	11·5
1981	8,246	11·8
1982	8,388	12·5
1983	8,231	13·5
1984	8,547	13·0
1985	8,834	13·2
1986	8,828	13·3
1987	9,104	13·5
1988	9,523	14·3
1989	9,177	14·9
1990	9,534	14·3
1991	9,754	14·0
[1]1992	9,234	14·0

[1] Provisional.

Dairy Industry

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people were employed in the dairy industry in Scotland in each of the last 10 years.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 March 1993]*: The information sought is not held centrally. Estimates of the number of people employed on dairy farms are set out in the following table:

Year	*On-farm*
1982	11,756
1983	11,680
1984	11,288
1985	10,737
1986	10,230
1987	9,994
1988	9,494
1989	9,340
1990	9,323
1991	9,018
1992	8,636

Midwifery Services, Angus

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) which locations have been selected for general practitioner/community-led midwifery services in Angus;

(2) what estimates he has of the staff implications of creating general practitioner community-led midwifery services in Angus hospitals; and what representations or discussions he has had on this subject.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* As a pilot study, Tayside health board plans to introduce, in Forfar, a general practitioner-led maternity service which has on-call support from the local community midwives.

The new service will be located at Whitehills hospital and replace the current maternity service provided at Fyfe-Jamieson maternity home. The relocation, together with the change of service will result in a decrease in staffing of 10 whole-time equivalent nurses and 3·4 whole-time equivalent support staff.

The Secretary of State has not received any representations about the planned service or held discussions on the subject.

Tayside Health Board

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what salaries and other payments have been made to Tayside health board members in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* Remuneration of non-executive members of Tayside health board commenced only in April 1991 and has remained at its initial level of £5,000 per annum. In addition these members are entitled to claim travelling and subsistence allowances at rates set for members of public bodies. Information is not held centrally on the amount of allowances claimed on the payment of executive members, which is a matter for the board itself.

Maternity Provision

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on the maintenance of current maternity provision in Montrose and Arbroath.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 26 February 1993]:* I understand that Tayside health board has no plans, at present, to change the existing maternity provision in Montrose and Arbroath.

White Fish

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet representatives of the Scottish inshore fleet to discuss the problems resulting from undisclosed landings of white fish; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend has no plans at present to meet with representatives of the Scottish inshore fleet to discuss undisclosed landings of white fish.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to control undeclared landings of white fish at east coast ports in breach of vessels' quotas; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency devotes substantial resources to detecting and preventing undeclared landings. There are regular out of hours patrols by fishery officers and fishery protection vessels are deployed to patrol harbours where there is a risk of undeclared landings.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what powers are available to him to deal with white fish landings which are undisclosed for quota purposes; and how many times those powers have been used in the last two years for which figures are available.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* Vessels which fail to declare landings of white fish may be in breach of European Community regulations requiring the master of a vessel to submit to the authorities documents on the vessel's fishing activity and the catch landed. Failure to submit such documentation may lead to the imposition of a fine not exceeding £2,000. Masters of vessels will normally supply the necessary documentation when a landing is detected by the authorities. There has been one successful prosecution in the last two years.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research is being undertaken by his Department to investigate the extent of undisclosed white fish landings; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* There is no reliable source of information on the overall extent of undisclosed white fish landings. My Department's main priority is to take action to detect and prevent attempted clandestine landings and, where appropriate, to report cases to the prosecuting authorities.

Eastwood/East Kilbride

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to implement the proposed changes to the local government boundary between East Kilbride district council and Eastwood district council.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* As is usual is such cases, my Department invited the affected local authorities to propose a mutually convenient date for the transfer to take effect. No date has yet been volunteered. My officials have now written to the authorities setting a deadline of the end of March 1993 for them to agree a date. In the absence of agreement by that date the Secretary of State will make the order required to implement the changes. The date selected will be binding on all parties.

M80

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received to date from public bodies, organisations and individuals concerning the proposed extension of the M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The formal presentations made to regional and district councils and other bodies in the latter part of 1992 and the series of public meetings which followed have prompted 53 representations to date. Of these, seven have been from local authorities and public bodies, six from community councils and residents associations, eight from

organisations and 32 from individuals. In their representations the local authorities and public bodies have mainly supported the Kelvin Valley route with none coming out against it. The remainder of the representations have tended to reflect the particular interest of the group or individual concerned, with those living alongside the alternative A80 route opposing it and those affected by the Kelvin Valley route rejecting that line. A small number of individuals have questioned the justification for either route.

Computer Literacy

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to promote computer literacy among those aged 12 to 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 March 1993]*: Under the five to 14 programme, national guidelines provide schools with guidance on the application of computer learning in each of the curricular areas. In this way pupils will develop knowledge of computers and relevant skills in using technology.

Also, as part of a series of reports on effective learning and teaching, the Scottish Office education department plans to publish a report covering computing later this year. This report will make recommendations to help ensure quality in provision.

Improving standards of attainment, including those in information technology, will also be central to our consideration of the way forward in relation to the Howie committee's proposals for the development of upper secondary education.

New Towns

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what position has been reached in the wind-up of Scottish new town development corporations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 1 March 1993]*: Orders to wind-up East Kilbride and Glenrothes development corporations were made on 24 February 1992 with wind-up to be completed by 31 December 1995. These development corporations are due to make their first interim reports to the Secretary of State on progress towards wind-up by 30 June of this year. The dates planned for completion of the wind-up of Cumbernauld, Livingston and Irvine development corporations are 31 December in 1996, 1998 and 1999 respectively. Consultation about winding-up Cumbernauld development corporation will take place later this year with a view to an order being made in December.

On 12 and 13 February 1992 my right hon. and learned Friend informed the new town development corporations of his decisions about successor arrangements for economic development and the disposal of the corporation's assets, including housing. Subsequently the Scottish Office industry department provided development corporations with detailed guidance on implementation of these decisions. Further guidance covering the financial arrangements relating to the disposal of housing, the transfer of planning and the disposal of environmental, civic and community assets is being prepared in light of comments from the new town development corporations and other interested parties, including Scottish Homes and local authorities. All of the guidance emphasises the importance of early and detailed consultation between the development corporations and Scottish Enterprise, local enterprise companies, Scottish Homes and local authorities. These discussions have begun and are at different stages in each town reflecting the different wind-up timetables.

Some progress in the disposal of assets and liabilities has been made in all of the new towns and officials from the Scottish Office industry department are in regular contact to monitor progress.

Cumbernauld and Kilsyth Schools

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which schools in the Cumbernauld and Kilsyth constituency will be inspected by Her Majesty's inspectorate for schools in the next five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate inspects each year a representative sample of schools designed to ensure balance in terms of factors such as location, size, performance, date of previous inspection. An appropriate proportion of schools in the hon. Member's constituency will be included in the sample. The list of schools to be inspected is not published in advance; schools and their education authorities are informed by letter when the inspection is about to commence.

English and Communication Skills

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to improve the use of English and communication skills among those persons aged 12 to 16 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* A number of measures already in place are aimed at the improvement of the use of English and communication skills. The national guidelines "English Language 5-14" are designed to ensure that between these ages pupils learn to communicate effectively in written and spoken forms and that due attention is given to grammar and spelling.

We have also recently published the report "Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools: English" as part of a series which describes good practice in a range of secondary school subjects.

Improving standards of attainment, including attainment in English, will also be central to our consideration of the way forward in relation to the Howie committee's proposals for the development of upper secondary education.

Gaelic

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what estimate he makes of the total number of persons domiciled in Scotland who speak Gaelic as *(a)* their first language and *(b)* their sole language.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The information requested is not available. The 1991 census revealed, however, that there were 69,979 people in Scotland who could speak, read or write Gaelic.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average age of persons domiciled in Scotland speaking Gaelic as a first language.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The information requested in not available.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total expenditure by his Department in the promotion of the Gaelic language during the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The total expenditure on the promotion of Gaelic in 1992-93 is estimated to be £11·9 million. This comprises support for Gaelic education through a scheme of specific grants to local authorities and otherwise; for the building of an extension to Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic college on Skye (alongside contributions from Scottish Television and Grampian Television); for Gaelic broadcasting; and for organisations which exist to support the language and culture.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the projected expenditure by his Department in the promotion of the Gaelic language in each year of the future public expenditure programme.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The projected expenditure is as follows:

	£ million
1993-94	12·095
1994-95	11·936
1995-96	12·173

Prosecutions

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of cases referred to the Scottish Crown prosecution service in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* July 1991 to June 1992 resulted in (i) prosecution and (ii) conviction, in each offence category.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Information is not available in the form requested. Table 1 shows the total number of reports to the procurator fiscal for 1990-92, and the total number and percentage of these reports which resulted in court proceedings. Table 2 shows the number of persons proceeded against in 1990-91 by offence category and the number and percentage of these persons who subsequently had a charge proved against them.

Table 1

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Reports to procurator fiscal	360,896	368,974	367,063
Reports resulting in court proceedings	188,259	196,268	189,934
Other non-court proceedings[1]	131,824	137,380	141,542
No proceedings	40,813	35,326	35,587
Percentage of reports resulting in court proceedings	52	53	52

[1] Non-court proceedings include, warning letters, conditional offers for motor vehicle offences, fiscal fines and diversion.

Table 2

Main crime or offence	*Persons called to court*		*Charge proved*		*Percentage of persons called to court with charge proved*	
	1990	*1991*	*1990*	*1991*	*1990*	*1991*
Total crimes and offences	197,532	190,246	175,947	170,492	89	90
Homicide	103	101	87	87	84	86
Serious assault	1,563	1,304	1,162	968	74	74
Handling offensive weapons	1,411	1,355	1,011	1,010	72	75
Robbery	841	790	637	614	76	78
Other non-sexual violence	514	418	402	317	78	76
Sexual assault	229	177	165	124	72	70
Lewd and libidinous practices	431	397	355	326	82	82
Other indecent	1,150	889	1,115	864	97	97
Housebreaking	7,345	6,617	6,084	5,429	83	82
Theft by opening l'fast places	3,562	3,529	2,832	2,818	80	80
Theft of motor vehicle	3,195	3,139	2,322	2,282	73	73
Shoplifting	7,061	7,116	6,402	6,409	91	90
Other theft	10,621	9,033	9,128	7,689	86	85
Fraud	3,709	3,211	3,329	2,883	90	90
Other dishonesty	4,371	4,280	3,630	3,541	83	83
Fire-raising	213	177	174	144	82	81
Vandalism, etc.	6,673	6,069	5,810	5,232	87	86
Crimes against public justice	6,985	6,602	5,718	5,333	82	81
Drugs	3,417	4,022	3,016	3,474	88	86
Other crimes	41	43	24	30	59	70
Simple assault	16,080	14,124	13,086	11,389	81	81
Breach of the peace	23,291	19,805	20,219	17,115	87	86
Drunkenness	2,898	2,162	2,820	2,092	97	97
Other miscellaneous offences	18,157	18,650	16,726	17,645	92	95
Reckless and careless driving	8,778	7,748	8,073	7,159	92	92
Drunk driving	8,835	8,452	8,607	8,227	97	97
Speeding	18,175	21,790	17,946	21,547	99	99
Unlawful use of vehicle	21,016	21,677	19,603	20,415	93	94
Vehicle defect offences	5,029	4,490	4,587	4,091	91	91
Other motor vehicle offences	11,838	12,079	10,877	11,238	92	93

Schools Expenditure

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the expenditure on each *(a)* primary school pupil, *(b)* secondary school pupil and *(c)* average for all pupils, for the last financial year for which information is available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The information is given in the table. It does not include the cost of home to school transport, school meals, education authority central administration and loan charges.

Net current expenditure per pupil in 1990-91

	£
Primary	1,508
Secondary	2,675
All schools	2,098

Note: These figures have been compiled from local authority financial returns. The "All schools" figure relates to nursery, primary, secondary and special schools.

Business Rate

Mr. Beith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many business rate appeals are currently outstanding in each Scottish region and in total.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Not all the valuation areas are coterminous with Scottish regions. The information in the form that it is recorded is set out in the table.

Outstanding business rate appeals as at 25 February 1993

Valuation areas	*Appeals*
Borders	Nil
Central	63
Dumfries and Galloway	29
Fife	298
Grampian	135
Highland/Western Isles	900
Lothian	445
Orkney/Shetland	6
Strathclyde	450
Tayside	1,068
TOTAL	3,394

Hospitals

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what discussions his Department has had with the University of Edinburgh and Lothian health board with regard to the replacement of the dental hospital in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if it is still his policy to build a replacement for the Royal infirmary in Edinburgh; and when he expects to make an announcement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Discussions between the University of Edinburgh and Lothian health board and the Scottish Office Home and Health Department about the proposed new Edinburgh dental hospital continue. My right hon. Friend remains fully committed to providing such capital investment as is necessary to establish the dental hospital. It will be for the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary NHS trust, if its application for trust status is approved, to take forward plans for a new dental hospital in consultation with prospective purchasing health boards.

Mr. Darling: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if it is still his policy to build a new dental hospital in Edinburgh; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Policy on the distribution of acute hospitals in Edinburgh is a matter primarily for Lothian health board, in consultation with the Scottish Office Home and Health Department and subject to the approval of my right hon. Friend. Consultations are continuing and proposals will be issued for public consultation in due course.

Civil Legal Aid

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what change there has been in the cost of civil legal aid between 1991-92 and 1992-93; and if he will publish the figures on that matter supplied to him by the Scottish Legal Aid Board and its commentary on those figures.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Gross expenditure on civil legal aid in 1991-92 was £16·58 million. Figures provided by the Scottish Legal Aid Board show that actual expenditure to the end of January 1993 was £20·54 million. The board estimates that expenditure for the full financial year 1992-93 will be £23·45 million—a projected increase of 41·4 per cent. over the 1991-92 outturn. In the view of the Scottish Legal Aid Board, the rise is caused by an increasing number of grants and by grants being claimed and paid more quickly.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 8 March 1993

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Market Testing

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will subject his legal advisers to market testing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We have no plans to market test the work of the FCO legal advisers.

Hong Kong

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are Governor Patten's proposals for current economic reforms in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The Governor of Hong Kong made it clear in his address to the Legislative Council on 7 October 1992 that he would maintain the policies that have generated economic success in Hong Kong, including low predictable taxes, Government spending which does not outpace economic growth and the encouragement of competition. In his Budget on 3 March, Hong Kong's Financial Secretary confirmed that Hong Kong's economy continues to perform strongly. He proposed tax cuts, increased expenditure on priority areas, and measures to assist Hong Kong's most disadvantaged citizens. He also forecast an increase of HKD6·8 billion in Hong Kong's projected reserves in 1996-97.

Immigration

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a decision is to be taken on applications to enter the United Kingdom made to the post in Islamabad by Mrs. Salim Bi (born 2-1-1934) and her son, Shah Jehan (born 16-1-1976) (Ref: Imm/67849); when DNA test results concerning these applicants were received at the post; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the absence of any information about this case, I have asked the High Commission in Islamabad for a full report. I shall arrange for the hon. Member to receive a substantive reply from the migration and visa correspondence unit of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as soon as possible.

Israel

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the number of nuclear warheads in Israel's possession; and what are the implications of this for his foreign policy.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have no direct evidence that Israel has developed a nuclear weapons programme. However, we are well aware of reports that Israel has such a programme and we shall continue to call on the Israeli Government to allay suspicions categorically by acceding to the non-proliferation treaty as a non-nuclear weapon state. We also call on Israel to work with her neighbours to create a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the middle east.

Employment Protection Regulations

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of all circulars and other advice issued by his Department concerning the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive.

Mr. Goodlad: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has not yet issued any circulars or other advice concerning the transfer of undertakings regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive.

Rwanda

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Rwandan authorities concerning human rights abuses in Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The EC and its member states have repeatedly expressed their concern at the present situation in Rwanda and have appealed to all parties concerned to be flexible so that a peaceful solution can be found to their difficulties. The most recent EC statement was issued on 15 February and a copy has been placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how his Department are monitoring the human rights situation in Rwanda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have no diplomatic mission in Rwanda. Other United Kingdom missions in the region follow closely developments in that country. We also have regular consultations with EC partners and other western countries who have resident representations in Rwanda.

Malawi

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been made for international observers to be present for the referendum in Malawi on a multi-party system.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In conjunction with other members of the international community we are prepared in principle to provide observers to the referendum process, subject to the Malawian Government and the Opposition pressure groups reaching a satisfactory agreement on the conduct of the referendum.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy to provide assistance on request to the two main opposition political parties in Malawi for printing of leaflets and posters for the referendum on a multi-party system.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made it clear to both the Malawian Government and the political pressure groups that we shall not become involved in any way in the campaigning leading up to the referendum.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what arrangements have been made by his Department to monitor the referendum in Malawi; and what assistance has been provided by Her Majesty's Government to the Government of Malawi and the main opposition parties in connection with the referendum on a multi-party system.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I refer the hon. Member to my answer today on the arrangements for observers. We are ready to consider offering financial assistance through the United Nations to support the referendum process under the same conditions.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of Malawi concerning the referendum on a multi-party system planned for 15 June 1993.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The referendum in Malawi is scheduled to take place on 14 June. We have repeatedly made clear to the Malawian Government that the conditions under which it is held must be fair and in accordance with internationally accepted criteria if it is to have any credibility with the international community.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have no plans to carry out such a survey.

In common with civil servants generally, the conditioned working hours of most full-time staff in the Lord Chancellor's Department and its agencies are 41 gross per week in London and 42 gross per week elsewhere.

Subject to the requirement for all staff to fulfil their conditioned hours, managers have discretion to vary the office hours of individual staff. Court offices are open to the public from 10 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday. Chief clerks ensure that sufficient staff are available at all times when courts are open to the public.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will place in the Library copies of all circulars and other advice issued by his Department concerning the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive.

Mr. John M. Taylor: My Department has no plans to issue any circulars on general advice concerning either the regulations or the directive.

Stipendiary Magistrates

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to work towards the appointment of stipendiary magistrates in every town with a population exceeding 70,000.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has no plans to work towards the appointment of stipendiary magistrates in every town with a population exceeding 70,000. Stipendiary magistrate appointments are to commission areas and the Lord Chancellor will consider such appointments normally when he receives requests from those local areas and he considers that the workload warrants that course. The Lord Chancellor has full confidence in the ability of the lay magistracy to cope with the bulk of work. The purpose of stipendiary appointments is to support the lay magistracy.

Law of Domiciles

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the Government plan to introduce legislation based on the conclusions of the report of the Law Commission on the law of domiciles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor hopes to make an announcement about this subject in the near future.

Committal Proceedings

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what assessment he has made of the extent to which magistrates are aware of, and use, their powers to hold full committal hearings in cases where there is genuine doubt as to whether the accused has a case to answer before a higher court.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The provisions in the Magistrates' Courts Act 1980 in respect of committal proceedings place the onus on the accused's representative to request that the court consider a submission of no case to answer. For this reason it is not appropriate that I make any assessment of magistrates' awareness of the provisions of section 6 of the Act. The future of committal proceedings is one of many issues on which my Department has submitted views to the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice.

Legal Aid

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what representations he has received regarding the accuracy of the statistics given in the leaflet "Legal Aid—How It Works", with particular reference to the average payments to solicitors under the duty solicitor schemes in 1992-93; and how the figure given was arrived at.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No formal representations have been made. However, it has since come to my attention that there is an inconsistency in the way in which the estimate of the average payment to solicitors in 1992-93 under the duty solicitor schemes was calculated. Average payments to solicitors in the years 1988-89 to 1991-92 were derived by dividing gross expenditure on the schemes by the total number of people helped under the schemes. The

estimate for 1992-93 was calculated by dividing estimated gross expenditure by the estimated number of bills that will be paid under the schemes. This resulted in an incorrect figure of £101 for 1992-93 because it is not unusual for claims to be aggregated, that is, a single claim may include a number of acts of assistance given to a number of people.

It is estimated that 885,000 people will receive assistance under the schemes in 1992-93 and that gross expenditure will amount to £72 million. Therefore, the average payment to solicitors in 1992-93 will be £81.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many copies of the leaflet "Legal Aid—How it Works" were published by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Three thousand copies of the leaflet "Legal Aid—How it Works" were published by the Lord Chancellor's Department.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department to whom the leaflet, "Legal Aid —How it works" produced by the Lord Chancellor's Department, was distributed.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Individual copies of the booklet were sent to legal journalists and to peers and Members of Parliament. Since publication in December 1992 copies have been supplied on demand to the Legal Aid Board, the Law Society, individual solicitors, branches of NACAB and members of the public.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of the legal aid bill is accounted for by *(a)* solicitors' fees and *(b)* barristers' fees for each of the last five years.

Mr. John M. Taylor The proportion of legal aid expenditure accounted for by solicitors' and barristers' fees for each of the last five years was as follows—

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Gross Expenditure—£ million	543	610	715	848	1,097
Solicitors—Per cent.	71	71	69	68	68
Barristers—Per cent.	17	19	18	18	17

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the average payment by the legal aid fund to *(a)* barristers and *(b)* solicitors in 1991-92.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The average payment made to barristers and solicitors from the legal aid fund in 1991-92 was as follows:

	Barristers	*Solicitors*
Legal Aid Fund	£335·77	£236·29

For barristers this is an average of payments made in respect of civil legal aid and criminal legal aid in the magistrates' courts. For solicitors this figure is an average of payments made in respect of civil legal aid, criminal legal aid in the magistrates courts, assistance by way of representation, the green form scheme and the duty solicitor schemes. Payments in respect of criminal legal aid in the higher courts are not made from the legal aid fund administered by the Legal Aid Board. Average payments in those cases in 1991-92 were £677·64 for barristers and £741·68 for solicitors.

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the cost of the leaflet produced by the Lord Chancellor's Department entitled "Legal Aid—How it Works".

Mr. John M. Taylor: The cost of the leaflet "Legal Aid —How it Works" produced by the Lord Chancellor's Department was £3,557.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Street Collections

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he will be issuing guidelines to local authorities on street collections from 1 September.

Mr. Jack: The current legislation governing street collections—the Police, Factories etc (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1916 and the Charitable Collections (Transitional Provisions) Order 1974—will remain in force until replaced by the new provisions in part III of the Charities Act 1992.

The date for commencement of these provisions has not yet been finally settled, although we hope to make an announcement shortly. There will be full consultation on the new regulations before they are brought into force.

Secure Training Centres

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many places at secure training centres will be provided to meet needs arising in Nottinghamshire; where these places will be available; when they will be provided; and how much they will cost in capital and revenue terms;

(2) what consultations he intends to hold, and with whom, about his plans to establish secure training centres;

(3) how many places at secure training centres will be necessary to meet needs in England and Wales; where these centres will be located; when they will be open; and how much they will cost in capital and revenue terms.

Mr. Jack: As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear in his statement to the House on 2 March, at columns 139-42, we are now preparing for the introduction of a new secure training order. In so doing, we are considering, inter alia, such matters as location, costs and numbers of places for the projected secure training centres. As part of this process, we will be seeking the views of representatives from a range of criminal justice agencies, voluntary agencies and interest groups.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to

ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Staff work the number of hours specified in their conditions of service, but there is flexibility on how that is achieved. Where there is a direct service to the public—for example, in passport offices or in the public inquiry office of the immigration and nationality department—public counters and telephone bureaux are manned for the advertised hours. If my hon. Friend has encountered a specific problem, I should be glad to have details.

Operation Container

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 11 February, *Official Report*, column *773*, about the future of Operation Container, in how many cases in Greater Manchester police officers were involved in the operation other than on rest day working; how many worked on their rest days at the latest date for which figures are available; what information was obtained by the prison service area manager for the Trans-Pennine area at his meeting on 5 February about the implications of police cell usage on police operations in Greater Manchester; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The information requested is being obtained from the Greater Manchester police and I will write to the right hon. Member as soon as possible. As was explained in my answer of 11 February, the implications for the Greater Manchester police of the prisoners in police cells problem was discussed with senior headquarters officers on 5 February. It was explained then that Operation Container had been run largely on the basis of rest day working.

Baby Food, Styal Prison

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements currently exist for the supply of baby food to women with young children in Her Majesty's prison, Styal; and what changes have recently occurred in the arrangements.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Fresh raw materials are supplied by the main kitchen to the mother and baby unit at Her Majesty's prison Styal. Babies' meals are then prepared by the mothers in the unit kitchen. Pre-packaged baby food supplements are also available. Until 2 March, these supplements have been bought centrally wholesale. In order to be more sensitive to the individual needs and preferences of the children and offer a greater choice to mothers the unit, from 2 March local purchases of baby food supplements have been made. There is no extra cost to the food budget.

Prevention of Terrorism Acts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were *(a)* arrested or *(b)* stopped and questioned under the terms of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts in 1990.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* The available information is contained in the Home Office statistical bulletin on the operation of the prevention of terrorism legislation—No. 5/93.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have had their period of detention under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act extended pending the results of forensic tests.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* In considering each application for an extension of detention under the prevention of Terrorism Act, I have regard to the criteria set out by Lord Colville in paragraph 5.1.6. of his 1987 review of the Act—Cm. 246—which include the need for further forensic work. It is not possible to give statistics of the kind requested based on the specific relevant criteria that applied in each individual case.

HEALTH

Nurses

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by regional health authority area, the number of qualified nurses in employment in the national health service for each year since 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the tables. All figures are independently rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents. Figures exclude agency staff. For 1989 to 1991, England totals include staff working in the London ambulance services and family health services authorities. In 1991, the special health authorities total include qualified nurses working in the special hospitals service authority—Broadmoor, Rampton and Ashworth. Figures for 1982 can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Qualified nurses in each regional health authority
September 1979 to 1991

Whole-time equivalents

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Northern	14,580	14,880	15,170	—	15,720	16,040	16,590	16,910	17,280	17,410	17,260	16,950	16,880
Yorkshire	15,180	15,740	16,250	—	16,810	17,290	17,880	18,060	18,530	18,700	18,670	18,540	18,480
Trent	18,180	18,190	18,830	—	19,800	20,400	21,370	21,830	22,540	22,840	22,720	23,090	23,290
East Anglia	7,220	7,430	7,580	—	8,020	8,420	8,820	8,970	9,280	9,550	9,720	9,760	9,810
North West Thames	15,390	15,590	16,490	—	16,250	16,850	16,870	16,740	16,040	16,060	15,850	15,590	16,280
North East Thames	16,690	16,490	16,420	—	19,180	19,210	19,580	19,560	19,850	20,000	19,570	19,800	20,050
South East Thames	16,560	17,090	17,040	—	17,780	17,770	18,030	18,430	18,520	18,880	19,070	18,740	16,620
South West Thames	13,730	13,990	13,970	—	14,160	14,160	14,260	14,060	13,860	14,090	14,150	13,760	14,120
Wessex	11,080	11,330	11,250	—	12,140	12,430	12,810	12,990	13,190	13,660	13,660	13,970	14,130
Oxford	8,580	9,000	9,070	—	9,320	9,870	10,110	10,250	10,540	10,690	10,680	11,030	11,320
South Western	13,200	14,110	14,550	—	14,560	14,680	15,220	15,460	15,770	15,730	15,870	16,320	16,130

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
West Midlands	19,850	20,790	21,360	—	22,560	23,020	23,820	24,380	25,090	24,770	25,140	25,460	25,210
Mersey	11,860	12,130	12,120	—	12,540	12,570	12,930	13,040	12,910	13,130	13,260	12,930	12,620
North Western	18,140	19,270	19,440	—	21,010	21,810	22,470	22,810	22,770	22,960	23,160	22,920	23,230
London postgraduate SHAs	2,790	2,930	2,990	—	3,480	3,200	3,360	3,310	3,240	3,450	3,390	3,390	5,050
TOTAL	205,670	212,500	216,880	219,300	223,320	227,720	234,130	236,770	239,360	241,920	242,190	242,340	243,250

Cancer Screening

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans there are to make the national screening programme for breast and cervical cancer available to women aged over 65 years.

Mr. Sackville: Breast and cervical screening is already available to women aged 65 and over. In respect of breast screening, it is available every three years on request. For cervical screening, women over 64 are no longer invited for screening under the call-recall programme but may ask to have a cervical smear at any time. Women aged 65 or over who have not had two consecutive negative smears in the last 10 years should continue to be recalled for screening as part of the national programme.

Mobile Phones (Brain Cancer)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has currently commissioned as to whether non-ionising radiation in mobile telephones can cause brain cancer; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The National Radiological Protection Board advises the Government on risks to human health from non-ionising electromagnetic radiation, including emissions from mobile radiotelephones. The board's advice is that the radio frequency energy emitted by hand-held radiotelephones does not constitute a cancer hazard on the basis of available research evidence. The Department of Trade and Industry, together with the Science and Engineering Research Council and a number of industrial participants are funding a research study of the physical interaction of fields from hand-held radiotelephones and the human head. The results from this and other studies will enable a better assessment of the extent to which emissions from these devices comply with recommended restrictions on human exposure.

Doctors

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number and percentage of female, male and ethnic minority doctors with A+, A, B and C merit awards.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the ethnic origin of award holders is not held centrally. The breakdown requested by sex and level of award is as follows:

	Male	*per cent.*	*Female*	*per cent.*	*All consultants*	*per cent.*
A+	195	1·3	8	0·3	203	1·1
A	655	4·4	48	1·7	703	4·0
B	1,451	9·8	115	4·0	1,566	8·9
C	3,184	21·6	402	13·8	3,586	20·3
	5,485	37·2	573	19·7	6,058	34·3

Note: Percentages relate to total of female, male and all consultants respectively. Figures for England and Wales.

Health Service Staff

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make available details of the full-time equivalent numbers of *(a)* medical, *(b)* nursing, *(c)* professional and technical, *(d)* administration, *(e)* management and *(f)* other staff employed by health authorities and trusts in England on 30 September in each year since 1990.

Mr. Sackville: The information is given in the table.

NHS staff by main staff group at 30 September—England

	Whole-time equivalent 1990	1991[1]
Medical and Dental	45,390	46,530
Nursing and Midwifery	395,360	392,200
Professional and Technical	83,990	86,890
Administrative and Clerical	120,040	127,370
General/Senior Managers	9,680	13,340
Other	133,740	128,530

[1] Includes some redesignation between staff groups, for example Nursing and Midwifery to general/senior managers.
Information for 30 September 1992 is not yet available.
Source: Medical Manpower Census; Non Medical Workforce Census; Aggregate Form KM49).

NHS Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review the actual time contribution of chairmen and non-executive directors of NHS trusts and the basis on which their emoluments are assessed.

Dr. Mawhinney: I shall be considering these matters in due course.

Surcharges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce for health authority and trust chairmen and non-executive directors the same liability to surcharge as applies to local government councillors.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have no plans to do so.

NHS Chairmen and Directors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of (i) chairmen and (ii) non-executive directors in England in 1991-92 who declined to receive emoluments in respect of membership of *(a)* regional health authorities, *(b)* district health authorities, *(c)* family health service authorities and *(d)* hospital trusts.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which she has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if she will make a statement on her policy on hours of staff working each work.

Mr. Sackville: We do not believe that such a survey is required and are not aware of any difficulties experienced by members of the public on Friday afternoons. If my hon. Friend has a particular case in mind perhaps he will let me have the details.

Liver Disease

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what have been the death rates from (i) cancer of the liver, (ii) cirrhosis of the liver and (iii) other liver diseases for each year since 1972.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Death rates (per 100,000 population) from (i) malignant neoplasm of the liver, ICD 155; (ii) chronic liver disease and cirrhosis of the liver, ICD 571 and (iii) other diseases of the liver, ICDs 570, 572 and 573

	(i) Death from malignant neoplasm of the liver		*(ii) Death from chronic liver disease and cirrhosis of the liver*		*(iii) Death from other diseases of the liver*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1972	1·4	0·7	3·6	3·2	0·6	0·6
1973	1·4	0·8	3·9	3·4	0·7	0·6
1974	1·4	0·9	3·8	3·4	0·7	0·8
1975	1·5	0·8	3·8	3·6	0·6	0·7
1976	1·5	0·7	4·3	3·4	0·7	0·6
1977	1·5	0·9	4·1	3·3	0·7	0·6
1978	1·6	0·8	4·3	3·6	0·8	0·7
1979	2·4	1·3	5·0	3·9	0·8	0·7
1980	2·2	1·5	4·8	4·2	0·9	0·8
1981	2·6	1·6	4·8	4·1	1·0	0·9
1982	2·5	1·8	4·7	4·0	0·9	0·9
1983	2·5	1·6	4·6	4·2	0·7	0·8
1984	2·9	1·8	5·0	4·2	0·6	0·7
1985	2·8	1·9	5·7	4·7	0·8	0·7
1986	3·1	2·0	5·7	4·5	0·8	0·8
1987	3·0	2·0	6·1	4·7	0·7	0·8
1988	3·4	2·3	6·1	5·1	0·8	0·8
1989	3·3	2·2	6·5	5·4	0·9	0·7
1990	3·3	2·2	6·8	5·3	0·7	0·6
1991	3·5	2·5	7·0	5·2	0·7	0·5

Waiting Lists

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the number of patients on the in-patient waiting list by health authority and trust in England on 31 March 1990, 1991 and 1992; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is given in "Hospital Waiting List, In-patients and Day Cases" published twice a year—information on trusts was first published for September 1991—copies of which are available in the Library. Provisional waiting time figures published recently show that in the 12 months to 31 December 1992 the number of people waiting over a year for in-patient treatment fell by over 51,000 to the lowest figure ever recorded.

Waiting Times

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the percentage achievement rate in each health authority and which health authorities had not supplied monitoring information to her Department for the period April to September 1992, in respect of *(a)* waiting times for initial assessment in accidents and emergencies, *(b)* waiting times in out-patient clinics, *(c)* cancellation of operations on the day of admission and *(d)* re-admission of patients within one month of a second cancelled operation, indicating the patients charter targets in each case.

Mr. Sackville: Health authorities, as purchasers of services, are required to publish annual reports giving details of the performance against all relevant patients charter rights and the standards achieved by their providers. They should have produced their first reports by the end of June. A commentary on overall performance will be included in the chief executive's annual report for 1992-93.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what targets have been set for each district health authority for waiting times between general practitioner referral and initial consultant appointments.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones) on 4 March at column *219*.

Electrocution

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many deaths by electrocution there were in the last year for which figures are available; and how many of these involved domestic users.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the tables.

Table 1: Deaths by electrocution in England and Wales, 1991

	Males	*Females*
Accidents caused by electric current ICD E925	51	6
Suicide and self-inflicted injury (leading to death) by electrocution		

	Males	Females
E958.4	16	3
Injury (leading to death) by electrocution, undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted		
E988.4	6	—
Total	73	9

Table 2: Deaths by electrocution (occurring in the home in England and Wales), 1991

	Males	Females
Accidents caused by electric current and involving domestic wiring and appliances		
E925.0	18	3
Suicide and self-inflicted injury (leading to death) by electrocution		
E958.4	13	2
Injury (leading to death) by electrocution, undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted		
E988.4	2	—
Total	33	5

Tobacco Advertising

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of all the submissions received to date in relation to the publication "Effect of Tobacco Advertising on Tobacco Consumption," a discussion document reviewing the evidence.

Dr. Mawhinney: Comments on the discussion document were not invited on the basis that they would be made public. It would not be appropriate to place copies of the submissions received in the Library without the specific consent of the organisations or individuals concerned.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Teletext Subtitling

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received about the provision of teletext subtitling for the deaf by independent television companies since 1 January; and if he will seek to introduce arrangements to transfer to his Department responsibility for monitoring such provision.

Mr. Brooke: Both hon. Members and members of the public have written to me about the provision of subtitling services for the deaf. I understand that the problems at the beginning of the year have now been resolved. The Independent Television Commission is responsible for monitoring these services and I see no need to change this arrangement, which was established by the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Key: My Department, which was formed in April 1992, has awarded a contract to Sema Group Ltd. for the supply of computer equipment and associated services. It is currently in the process of contracting out a range of central services, including mailroom services, minor maintenance, office cleaning, porterage, reprographics, security, central typing and secretarial cover. The Department has no in-house team to bid for the work and has decided to contract out these services so it can concentrate on its core policy tasks.

The royal parks division contracted out grounds maintenance work in February 1992. The successful contractors were:

Brophy Plc, Glendale Industries Limited, Serco Plc, Turfsoil Limited and Tyler Environmental Services Limited.

The then Secretary of State for the Environment, who was responsible for royal parks at the time, decided that the work should be contracted out for policy reasons.

Tourist Boards

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future of *(a)* the English tourist board and *(b)* the British Tourist Authority.

Mr. Key: The English tourist board and the British Tourist Authority have strategic roles to play in the promotion and development of tourism in this country. I have arranged for the chief executives to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many staff were *(a)* employed and *(b)* made redundant by (i) the British Tourist Authority and (ii) the English tourist board in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Key: The staff of the British Tourist Authority and the English tourist board are direct employees of the two bodies and all decisions relating to their employment are taken by the members of the boards. Therefore, this question should be addressed to the chief executive of each organisation.

TV Licence Fee

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when regulations will be laid to bring into effect the television licence fee increases announced in December 1992 for 1 April.

Mr. Brooke: I announced on 9 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *683*, that from 1 April 1993 the fee for a colour television licence would increase to £83 and the fee for a monochrome licence would rise to £27·50. On 5 March, I laid before the House the regulations necessary to bring these fees into force.

Television Governing Bodies

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the emoluments he has approved or the basis on which they are calculated for each member of the governing body of the BBC and the Independent Television Commission.

Mr. Brooke: Governors of the BBC and members of the ITC are remunerated as follows:

	£
BBC	
Chairman	57,360
Vice Chairman	14,715
National Governors	14,715
Governors	7,360
ITC	
Chairman	57,360
Deputy Chairman	14,715
National Members	11,040
Members	7,360

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Key: The staff of the Department and its agency work conditioned hours of 41 per week, including lunch breaks. Some operations in the Historic Royal Palaces Agency and the royal parks division are subject to seven days a week working and these are covered on a roster system. Friday afternoons are treated no differently from other days of the week.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Faulds: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what were the attendance figures for 1992 reported by the national museums and galleries in England for which he is responsible, broken down into the individual institutions, but including their outstations, with the figures in each case of the percentage increase or decrease on the attendance figures for 1991.

Mr. Key *[pursuant to his reply, 19 January 1992, c. 133]:* I am pleased to record that the 1992 admission figures for the natural history museum are higher than indicated in my earlier reply to the hon. Member. The estimated admission figure was 1,659,000 for 1992, which gives a change of 10 per cent. over the figures for 1991. This increase effects the estimated total figure for all the national museums and galleries, which should now be 22,813,985 with an overall percentage increase of 6·4 per cent. over 1991.

PRIME MINISTER

Family Perspective and Life Cycle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Prime Minister how the Government co-ordinate the way Departments put the family perspective and the life cycle into social and economic policy.

The Prime Minister: The family is central to social and economic policy. The implications for the family are fully considered by each Department in developing and operating its policies. Where policies cross the boundaries of departmental responsibility, these matters are discussed either directly between Departments or through specific inter-departmental groups and committees.

Privatised Companies

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will amend "Questions of Procedure for Ministers" so as to advise Ministers responsible for future privatisations that they should not subsequently accept paid positions on the boards of the privatised companies.

The Prime Minister: No. Such guidance is neither necessary nor appropriate. Former Ministers should make their own judgments about potential conflicts of interest, as other Members of Parliament do.

Lord Lieutenants and High Sheriffs

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what are the qualifications for nomination as lord lieutenant or high sheriff.

The Prime Minister: The only formal qualification required of lord lieutenants and high sheriffs is that the latter must own land in the county in which they are to hold office, but by custom both lord lieutenants and high sheriffs are expected to be based in their counties.

Pit Closures

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Prime Minister what steps he has taken to ensure that a co-ordinated response is made to areas where collieries are under threat of closure.

The Prime Minister: Lord Walker has been appointed to co-ordinate the regeneration effort in areas under threat of colliery closures. In all areas arrangements are in place to pull together the efforts of all relevant bodies: these include Government Departments, English Estates, training and enterprise councils, British Coal Enterprise, regional development organisations and local authorities.

Full Employment

Mr. Soley: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his oral answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column 138, if he will define the full employment that he seeks to achieve.

The Prime Minister: The Government pursue policies designed to achieve high levels of employment, consistent with low inflation. Measures to make the labour market competitive, flexible and efficient are an essential part of this.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charters

31. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the current situation with the implementation of the citizens charters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have made good progress in implementing the charter—90 per cent. of the initial policy commitments set out in the original citizens charter White Paper have been met or are in hand.

Our principal task now is to ensure delivery of the standards and their regular improvement.

38. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what new citizens charters he plans to introduce.

Mr. Robert Jackson: New charters in 1993 will cover child support; the environment; further and higher education. Other charters—like the parents charter—will be revised to reflect new, higher standards.

39. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the progress made at the meeting on the citizens charter held in Downing street on 17 February.

Mr. Waldegrave: We discussed some key areas of interest to citizens—transport, health and social security. We also discussed some important themes—complaints systems, inspectorates and league table of performance.

New announcements included a new complaints adjudicator for the Inland Revenue, commitment to publishing league tables of performance in the national health service and commitment to including service standards in British Rail franchises.

40. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the principal sectors of public service which have not yet been covered by the charter programme.

Mr. Robert Jackson: All public services and regulated utilities are covered by the charter programme. They all aim to apply charter principles to the specific needs of their customers.

41. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next intends to visit Scotland on departmental business to discuss progress there of the citizens charter programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am visiting Scotland later this week. I keep in close touch with the citizens charter programme there, and am pleased with the progress being made.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to monitor the proper implementation of the charters introduced so far; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The citizens charter requires all public service organisations to report regularly and publicly on their performance in meeting published service standards. We monitor overall progress in improving the delivery of public services through ministerial seminars chaired by the Prime Minister, and through formal reports on progress such as the "Citizen's Charter First Report"—Cm 2101—published in November 1992.

Research Students (Awards)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the members of the research students awards committees within each research council during each of the last five years, indicating the institution where each member is based.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I will write to the hon. Member with the information he has requested, copies of which will be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement outlining the criteria chosen by research councils to assess the quality of higher education institutions' departments when deciding upon the allocation of research student awards.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The criteria used by the research councils to assess the quality of higher education institutions' departments are as follows:

Agricultural and Food Research Council

The council's postgraduate studentship scheme is project-based. Applications are individually assessed on the following criteria:

1. the strength of the application to provide the student with a sound research education and training;
2. the reputation and track-record of the supervisor, department and institution;
3. the relevance to AFRC's scientific programme and priorities.

The studentship panels also use personal knowledge, Universities Funding Council selectivity exercise ratings and the information provided on the application form to judge the quality of the department.

The AFRC does not operate a quota system.

Economic and Social Research Council

The criteria which the ESRC employs for the recognition of HEI departments for research student awards were published in 1991 in the council's "Postgraduate Training Guidelines" (paragraph A3). They are:

1. the adequacy of provision for formal training for students in research methods and related issues;
2. the adequacy of the arrangements for the supervision of students;
3. the presence of a good research environment so that the student is conducting research in an environment of other scholars and postgraduates actively researching in related areas;
4. an adequate throughput of students so that the student is unlikely to become isolated from his or her peers;
5. a satisfactory thesis submission rate for students which demonstrates that the majority complete their research within the expected time.

The ESRC does not allocate research training awards to individual departments. Student applications are submitted to an annual competition. The criteria are published in the council's studentship handbook.

Medical Research Council

Criteria used by the MRC to assess the quality of higher education institutions' departments when deciding upon the allocation of research student awards are:

1. the quality of the proposed projects and their suitability as phD Projects;
2. the scientific track-record for the department and proposed supervisors. MRC asks for details of current grant funding and publications relevant to the proposed projects;
3. the department's track-record for training ie. the number of students in the department and the submission/completion rates;
4. the opportunities for a good broad-based training.

Natural Environment Research Council

The quality of the department is only one of the elements taken into consideration in deciding on research student awards. The NERC uses the total number of research students, and the total value of research grants in the departments as indicators of a vibrant research environment. Account is also taken of the excellence of the science involved, the training element within the programme, the track-record of the potential supervisor, and cooperation with industry.

Science and Engineering Research Council

Academic departments applying for quotas of SERC studentships need to give information on departmental complement (all staff, including vacant posts); the size of the postgraduate school (full-time and part-time PhD and Masters students); and the size of the undergraduate

school. Undergraduate degree results from the previous two years must be given. Sources of support for postgraduate students are summarised, as well as sources and scale of research grant/contract support. For each research studentship sought, a description of the research area must be provided, as well as details of the academic supervisor (number of students supervised, and number of relevant publications over the past two years), and any use required of SERC central or overseas facilities. Information is also sought on training programmes offered for research students.

Based on this information, quota allocations are made on the quality and timeliness of proposed areas of research, the academic track-record of departments (especially at postgraduate level), previous records of take-up of awards, and such indicators as submissions rates (departments with poor submission rates are sanctioned).

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what was *(a)* the total number and *(b)* the value in pounds sterling of (i) advanced course studentships, (ii) research studentships and (iii) research grants granted to each academic institution in the United Kingdom during each of the last five years by each research council.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Much of the information requested on research grants and studentships can be found, in most cases, in the research councils' annual reports or handbooks for the past five years. Copies of these publications are in the Library of the House. I am also obtaining some additional material which I propose to forward to the hon. Gentleman and place in the Library of the House as soon as it is available.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1) what plans he has to examine the process by which research councils select membership of research student awards committees;

(2) if he will make it his policy to publish guidelines to research councils to secure that members of research students awards committees who have a close connection with an academic institution or institutions make a declaration of interests and are prevented from taking direct decisions on the allocation of research studentships to such institutions.

Mr. Robert Jackson: My right hon. Friend has no plans to intervene in the procedures adopted by the research councils either for selecting the members of their awards committees, or to select suitable recipients of their postgraduate awards. Where there is a potential conflict of interest affecting anyone involved in the selection process for awards, there are established procedures at all the research councils for preventing this from happening. Under agreed resource management arrangements, postgraduate studentship award allocations are matters entirely within the competence of the councils themselves.

Public Bodies (Chief Executives)

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those public bodies headed by a chief executive on a freelance consultancy contract arrangement.

Mr. Waldegrave: With the exception of the BBC, I am not aware of any instances as described by the hon. Member. The terms and conditions of employment of a chief executive of a public body are matters for the body concerned under the general direction of the sponsor Department and subject to the consent of the Treasury.

Charter Marks

Mr. Butler: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when the 1993 Charter Mark awards competition will be launched.

Mr. Robert Jackson: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister launched the 1993 Charter Mark scheme on 17 February at his seminar on the citizens charter. All public sector organisations providing a service directly to the public are eligible to apply. The closing date for the scheme is 30 June 1993. Up to 100 Charter Marks can be awarded this year. The response that we have had so far has been very encouraging and we are expecting a large number of applications.

Charters (Compensation)

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his oral answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column 14, which four charters in addition to the British Rail passengers charter and the London Underground customers charter contain provisions for financial compensation.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The following charters also contain provision for financial compensation.

the Benefits Agency customers charter;
the Contributions Agency employers and contributors charters;
the Northern Ireland Railways passengers charter.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The conditioned hours of all staff in the main grades are 41 hours gross a week in the London pay area and 42 hours gross a week elsewhere. The majority of staff in the agencies for which I am responsible work under flexible hours schemes to which core time rules apply. A condition of the flexible hours schemes is that they may be withdrawn if the system is abused or if the work needs make it impractical. There is no evidence of abuse of the system or that customers of the Department are not effectively serviced on Friday afternoons, so I see no reason to carry out a survey.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Witzemann *v.* Hauptzollamt München-Mitte

Mr. Stern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the judgment in the case of Witzemann *v.* Hauptzollamt München-Mitte by the European Court of Justice on 2 and 25 October and 6 December 1990, case C-343/89; what information he has as to the costs falling to the Community of the case; and if he will outline how a judgment against the accused would be enforced in such a case, in respect of financial penalties.

Sir John Cope: I have noted the outcome. There are no new United Kingdom policy implications. Where an

action is brought under article 177 of the EC treaty for a preliminary ruling by the ECJ, the costs of the action are reserved to the national court. Any judgment in the national court will be enforced in accordance with the laws of that member state.

Auditing

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to bring forward proposals for imposing a duty on auditors of firms in the regulated sector to report to the regulators.

Mr. Nelson: I am pleased to announce that a joint Treasury and Department of Trade and Industry consultation document is being published today. This includes draft regulations imposing a statutory duty on auditors to report to the Bank of England any information which they believe to be relevant to their client bank's fulfilment of the authorisation criteria in the Banking Act, in line with the recommendation made by Sir Thomas Bingham in his report of the inquiry into BCCI.

The consultation document also includes draft instruments extending a similar duty to report to the relevant regulatory authority, for auditors of building societies, friendly societies, persons regulated under the Financial Services Act, and at the initiative of my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, companies regulated under the Insurance Companies Act.

The instruments which would implement the statutory duty have been drafted in close consultation with the auditing profession, with bodies representing regulated firms, and with the regulators.

Comments are requested on the consultation document by 1 June. When the Government have had time to consider these, we will prepare draft instruments to lay before the House. These should come into force before the end of 1993.

Copies of the consultation document have been placed in the House Libraries.

WALES

Sheep Farmers

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the net farm income in real terms of sheep farmers in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The income figures in real terms—that is, deflated by the RPI 1991-92 = 100—are as follows:

Severely disadvantaged sheep farms

Year	
1979-80	6,677
1980-81	11,524
1981-82	15,453
1982-83	10,233
1983-84	13,434
1984-85	14,537
1985-86	9,896
1986-87	13,414
1987-88	12,342
1988-89	19,104
1989-90	10,903
1990-91	11,373
1991-92	16,540

Inmos

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the highest number of employees at the Inmos plant in Newport; and what is *(a)* the present total and *(b)* the planned number in 1994 at Newport Wafer Fab, under the programme of Government assistance.

Mr. David Hunt: This information is commercially confidential.

Sheep Premium

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to the European Community to date in the current year concerning prompt payment of the final instalments of the sheep annual premium.

Mr. David Hunt: The European Commission took the decision on the final rate of premium last month. Publication of the rate in the *Official Journal* is expected shortly. We hope to be able to make the payments in early April.

Preseli Environmentally Sensitive Area

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farms could be included in the Preseli environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. David Hunt: About 2,300.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will review annually payments made under the Preseli environmentally sensitive area; and if he will index link them.

Mr. David Hunt: Payment rates are currently reviewed every two years and there are no plans to change these arrangements.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what criteria his Department used for designating all of the Preseli, Pembrokeshire district an environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. David Hunt: The environmentally sensitive area scheme was introduced to help conserve, through the maintenance or adoption of particular agricultural practices, areas of the countryside where the landscape, wildlife or historic interest is of national importance. Final decisions on the precise boundary of the Preseli ESA will be taken in the light of the forthcoming consultation exercise.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what organisation will set the conditions covering the environmentally sensitive area of Preseli; how its members will be appointed; and from what organisations they will be drawn.

Mr. David Hunt: The proposed management prescriptions for the Preseli ESA, which will form part of the consultation document that is to be issued shortly, have been drawn up by my Department in consultation with the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, the Countryside Council for Wales and other farming and environmental bodies.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the overall budget for the Preseli

environmentally sensitive area for 1993-94 and his estimate for 1994-95; and what will be the total acreage covered.

Mr. David Hunt: The overall budget for the proposed Preseli ESA will be dependent upon the rates of payment to farmers which will be decided in the light of the forthcoming consultation exercise. It is anticipated that the Preseli ESA will cover approximately 115,000 hectares.

Cereal Growers

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many commercial cereal growers in Wales have completed yield data forms in each of the years from 1986; and how many of those grow winter wheat.

Mr. David Hunt: Holdings cannot be classified on the basis of whether they are commercial cereal producers. A close approximation to this group is the farm typology group "Specialist Cereal Holdings". The table gives the number of holdings in this group responding to the cereal production survey, and of those, how many grow wheat.

Number of specialist cereal holdings[1] in Wales responding to the April cereal production survey[2] each year from 1987 to 1992

Harvest year	*April survey year*	*Number of specialist cereal holdings*	*Of which grow wheat[3]*
1986	1987	4	0
1987	1988	19	7
1988	1989	19	7
1989	1990	8	3
1990	1991	12	7
1991	1992	13	6

[1] The classification of holdings into farm types is based upon a system of estimating the dominant activity on each holding using standard gross margins (SGMs). Conceptually the SGM is the difference between the value of the output of each activity and the variable costs of the necessary inputs to the activity. Specialist cereal holdings are therefore characterised by cereals production being the dominant activity.

[2] There are normally three cereal production surveys in the course of a year. The first is around August-September towards the end of the harvest period which provides a first estimate of cereal production. The second survey is conducted during November which produces another provisional estimate of total production. The third and final survey is in April and the results of this survey are used as the final cereal production estimates. The table has therefore been produced using only the holdings responsible to the April survey.

[3] No distinction is made between winter and spring sown varieties of wheat in the cereal production survey.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his best estimate of the number of commercial cereal growers in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: There were 250 specialist cereal growers in Wales according to the June 1992 agricultural census.

Agricultural Grants and Subsidies

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what sums were paid out by each of his divisional offices for each *(a)* agricultural subsidy scheme and *(b)* grant scheme available to farmers in 1992; how many agreements were entered into for each grant scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is as follows:

	Divisional Offices		
	Caernarfon £000s	*Carmarthen £000s*	*Llandrindod Wells £000s*
(a) Subsidies			
Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances	12,162	7,043	19,022
Sheep Annual Premium Scheme	32,090	19,784	42,364
Suckler Cow Premium Scheme	3,552	2,540	6,246
Oilseed Support Scheme 1992	60	53	132
Farm Woodland Scheme	11	10	16
(b) Grant Schemes			
Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme	1,284	2,733	1,892
Agriculture Improvement Scheme	375	832	460
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Scheme	371	318	362
Farm Diversification Grant Scheme	69	192	116
Farm Diversification Marketing and Feasibility Grant	6	4	7
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	388	547	607
Five year Set-Aside	37	217	144
One year Set-Aside	0	3	8
The number of agreements entered into in 1992 are as follows:			
Farm and Conservation Grant Scheme	63	46	126
Farm Diversification Grant Scheme	1	4	1
Farm Diversification Marketing and Feasibility Grants	1	5	5
Environmentally Sensitive Areas	93	15	9

Livestock Identification Scheme

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will include the livestock identification scheme in the Government's review of the scope for deregulation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The introduction of animal identification systems is a consequence of EC requirements.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received concerning the livestock identification scheme.

Mr. David Hunt: Several.

Farm Support Schemes

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what Government financial aid schemes are currently available to assist farm diversification and farm development and to support farm incomes in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: All the current agricultural support schemes, implemented under the common agricultural policy, contribute to a greater or lesser extent to the incomes of farm businesses. The most important to farmers in Wales in terms of overall expenditure include the sheep annual premium scheme, hill livestock compensatory allowances, suckler cow premium scheme, beef special premium scheme, farm and conservation grant scheme and the environmentally sensitive area scheme. The farm and conservation grant scheme is the only one of these schemes containing specific measures aimed at developing or improving the farm structure. Grants for farm diversification were available under this scheme, but were withdrawn on 18 January 1993.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, columns *340-41*, what interviews he had with persons with a view to appointing them as chairman of the Welsh Development Agency; how many persons expressed an interest in the post prior to its being advertised; how many persons he approached for the post; and how many meetings with potential appointees took place.

Mr. David Hunt: Applications for and expressions of interest in the post of chairman are confidential. I will be making an announcement on the appointment in due course.

Higher Education, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Welsh Higher Education Funding Council concerning the future of *(a)* academic teaching and research accommodation requirements of the Cardiff Business School, *(b)* the student residential accommodation requirements for the University of Wales College of Cardiff and *(c)* the proposed third campus proposal at Cardiff Bay.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None.

Special Schools (Psychiatry Services)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has with the south Glamorgan health authority concerning the cessation of provision of child and adolescent psychiatry services to special schools.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Employment Protection Regulations

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library copies of all circulars and other advice issued by his Department concerning the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the Acquired Rights directive.

Mr. David Hunt: A copy of my Department's letter of 9 November 1992 to health authorities in Wales has already been placed in the Library of the House; no other circulars or advice have been issued.

Community Facilities

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the number of approvals for new schemes involving capital grants to village halls, voluntary youth services and community centres which will be given in 1993-94.

Sir Wyn Roberts: In 1993-94 the resources available for this programme will be fully utilised in meeting commitments arising from previous years. No new schemes have been approved, therefore.

Disadvantaged Areas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what has been the rate of return on capital on cattle and sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979;

(2) what has been the rate of return on capital on livestock farms in disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979;

(3) what has been the rate of return on capital on specialist sheep farms in severely disadvantaged areas in Wales in each year since 1979;

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The available information is as follows:

Hill and Upland (SDA) Cattle and Sheep Farms

	Return on net worth Per cent.	*Return on tenant's capital Per cent.*
1986-87	−0·06	2·1
1987-88	2·00	4·9
1988-89	2·83	9·2
1989-90	−0·08	4·4
1990-91	−0·70	1·1
1991-92	0·70	4·8

Upland (DA) Livestock Farms

	Return on net worth Per cent.	*Return on tenant's capital Per cent.*
1986-87	0·78	n/a
1987-88	0·43	n/a
1988-89	1·19	n/a
1989-90	−1·26	n/a
1990-91	−2·43	n/a
1991-92	−1·44	n/a

n/a = not available.

Hill and Upland (SDA) Sheep Farms

	Return on net worth Per cent.	*Return on tenant's capital Per cent.*
1986-87	0·66	3·7
1987-88	−0·15	5·8
1988-89	2·84	10·3
1989-90	0·42	3·3
1990-91	0·23	3·2
1991-92	1·96	10·8

Hill and Upland (LFA) Livestock Farms

	Return on net worth Per cent.	*Return on tenant's capital Per cent.*
1986-87	0·45	2·1
1987-88	0·61	4·7
1988-89	2·40	8·8
1989-90	−0·09	2·4
1990-91	−0·65	—
1991-92	0·77	4·9

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Leyland DAF

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what investigations have been made into the transfer pricing policies of Leyland DAF.

Mr. Sainsbury: No investigations have been carried out by the DTI into the transfer pricing policies of Leyland DAF.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the 1991 accounts of Leyland DAF were laid at Companies house.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* I understand that the company accounts for Leyland DAF Ltd. for the calendar year 1991 have not been filed at Companies house. They were due by 31 October 1992 and a letter advising the company of this fact was issued six weeks before that date. The annual accounts were not received by then and as is normal in such cases Companies house initiated default procedures. A letter was issued on 16 November 1992 and in the absence of any response a further letter was issued on 8 January 1993. Notice of the appointment of an administrative receiver was received at Companies house on 5 February. As responsibility for the company's affairs now lies with the administrator, further action against the directors would be inappropriate.

Foreign-domiciled Companies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has about the number of foreign-domiciled companies operating in Great Britain.

Mr. Sainsbury: Comprehensive figures are not available on the total number of foreign owned companies which have invested in Great Britain. However, figures on manufacturing business published by the Central Statistical Office show 2,419 foreign-owned businesses in the United Kingdom in 1990.

Inspectors

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list his Department's published inspectors' reports which are critical of auditors for their failure to make a proper going concern evaluation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. Copies of published inspectors' reports are available in the Library for inspection.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what analysis his Department makes of his inspectors' reports; and to whom it is made available.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Reports of inspectors are considered carefully and information is disclosed, through the provisions of sections 451A and 449 of the Companies Act 1985, to prosecuting or regulatory bodies as appropriate. Relevant policy or legislative points are noted and considered within my Department.

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 4 February, *Official Report*, column *261*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* a summary of the annual plutonium production figures.

Mr. Eggar: No.

Retailers

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to prevent companies withdrawing supplies to retailers who offer their products at bargain prices to consumers.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Investigation of anti-competitive behaviour such as refusal to supply or withdrawing supplies is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading under the competition legislation. Where a refusal to supply is connected to resale price maintenance the Resale Prices Act 1976 has effect. Any evidence of such behaviour should be drawn to the Director General's attention.

Insurance Companies

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to make it compulsory for insurance companies to belong to an arbitration scheme.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No. I believe the present voluntary schemes offer a desirable degree of flexibility which could be lost if membership were made compulsory.

Correspondence

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the Minister for Energy intends to reply to the letter dated 8 December 1992 from the hon. Member for Sherwood.

Mr. Eggar: I replied to the hon. Member on 24 February.

Assisted Area Status

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment has been made of the effect on London unemployment of the designation of assisted area status.

Mr. Sainsbury: The main grant schemes available in the assisted areas, regional selective assistance and regional enterprise grants, are both demand-led and depend on businesses bringing forward suitable, eligible applications. Forecasting the possible impact of assisted area status on unemployment levels of individual areas is therefore not possible.

Coal Industry

Mrs. Golding: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much money has been paid in wages for not working to the work force involved in the 10 pits which are subject to the consultation process since the pits have ceased coaling.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Electricity

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his views have been sought by the European Commission on the proposed electricity interconnector between Scotland and Northern Ireland; and what his response has been.

Mr. Eggar: The President's views have not been sought by the European Commission on the proposed electricity interconnector between Scotland and Northern Ireland. Electricity matters in Scotland and Northern Ireland are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Eggar: My Department places a high priority on the service it offers to the public. Staff work a five-day week and local managers are required to make suitable arrangements to ensure that the public are properly served. The attendance requirements in each office apply on Fridays as on any other day and no special provision whatsoever is made for it to be treated any differently.

Bureaucracy

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress he is making in cutting departmental and other bureaucracy for small and medium-sized businesses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: All the regulatory Departments have begun a review of the regulations for which they are responsible. In parallel, seven task forces of business men, organised on a sectoral basis, are being set up to advise Ministers on priorities for repeal and simplification with special reference to the needs of small and medium-sized businesses. The names of the chairman and members of the task forces will be announced shortly.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many oil spills have come from platforms operating in the United Kingdom sector in the last five years; and what proportion this number represents of the total number of spills.

Mr. Eggar: Numbers of oil spills from offshore installations on the United Kingdom continental shelf are published annually in the "Brown Book"[1]. Total reported spills from all sources are also published annually by the Advisory Committee on Pollution of the Sea in its survey of oil pollution around the coasts of the United Kingdom. The figures for 1987-91 are:

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
(a) Total reported spills from all sources	500	559	764	791	705
(b) Spills from offshore installations	254	259	291	345	234
(c) Line *(b)* as a percentage of line *(a)*	50·8	46·3	38·1	43·6	33·2

In 1991 the 234 spills from offshore installations totalled 192 tonnes of oil. Within the 471 spills from other sources reported by ACOPS, the 34 largest totalled 1,864·4 tonnes and there were 275 for which the amount spilt was not known or not recorded.

[1] Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom: A Report to Parliament by the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his best estimate of the amount of oil discharged in oil-based drilling mud into the environment from offshore drilling rigs in the United Kingdom sector in each of the last five years.

Mr. Eggar: The discharge of oil-based drilling mud into the environment from offshore drilling rigs in the United Kingdom sector of the North sea is not permitted.

Discharge of oil-contaminated cuttings produced when using oil-based drilling mud may be permitted under an exemption, granted by the Secretary of State, from section 3 of the Prevention of Oil Pollution Act 1971.

The Government publish annually in the "Brown Book", "Development of the Oil and Gas Resources of the United Kingdom: A Report to Parliament by the Minister for Energy", the quantities of oil discharged with cuttings. For the five years 1987-91 these were:

	Tonnes oil
1987	12,400
1988	18,500
1989	13,400
1990	12,310
1991	11,225

Gas Industry

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to encourage further competition in the gas industry.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has referred the markets on gas supply, gas transportation and storage to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

We shall consider what steps should be taken to encourage further competition in the light of its report.

EC Steel Industry

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what conclusions have been reached in discussions between EC Ministers about the future of the EC steel industry; what recommendations he will be making to the Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: EC Ministers have agreed a package of measures based on a voluntary programme of capacity reductions. The main elements are: additional ECSC financial support for the social costs of closures; internal market measures, including strict application of state aid rules, speedy consideration, within EC competition rules, of inter-company co-operation agreements, and non-mandatory guidance on production and deliveries within the Community; and external measures, including limited restrictions on certain steel imports from central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Since United Kingdom industry has already undergone substantial restructuring and rationalisation, I would expect future capacity reductions predominantly in other EC countries, particularly Spain, Italy and Germany.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had from the British Constructional Steelwork Association concerning the alleged subsidisation of Italian constructional steelwork imported into the United Kingdom for the second Severn bridge and other projects.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

I wrote to the British Constructional Steelwork Association on 26 November. A copy of my letter has been sent to the hon. Member.

Euroway Estate, Bradford

Mr. Cryer: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which edition of the *Employment Gazette* contained information on the grant and project for Spring Ram Ltd. on Euroway estate, Bradford.

Mr. Sainsbury: The *Employment Gazette* has not contained any information on the current Spring Ram project at Euroway estate, Bradford.

Miners' Redundancies

Mr. Robathan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many miners have taken voluntary redundancy since 13 October 1992, both in total and on a pit-by-pit basis.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Coal.

Mr. Hicks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those coal mines and the number of coal miners and other staff made redundant in each year since 1977.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* This is a matter for British Coal.

Pension Funds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received in relation to the guidelines for disqualification from future positions as directors of private companies, including any directors in their past or present responsibilities found not to have paid over personal pension plan contributions made by deduction from wages and salaries.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: While such representations have been received in relation to specific cases, none has been received in general terms.

National Welsh Bus Company

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *739*, on what date he expects that his insolvency service disqualification unit will complete its consideration of the administrative receivers' reports into the conduct of the directors of National Welsh Bus Company.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The insolvency service has asked the administrative receivers of the National Welsh Bus Company to clarify and amplify matters contained in their report on the conduct of the directors of the company. Until that information is received the Secretary of State is unable to say when a decision will be taken.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *739*, what representations he has received concerning the failure of the directors of the National Welsh Bus Company during 1991 to pass on to the pension company, personal pension plan contributions deducted from the bus company's employees' wages and salaries.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The Secretary of State has received representations from a beneficiary of the National Welsh Bus Company pension scheme concerning a failure to pay over pension contributions deducted from employees' wages.

Shipbuilding

Miss Emma Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's policy on implementation of the EC decision on the level of shipbuilding intervention funding.

Mr. Heseltine: Following the decision of the European Commission, notified to member states on 18 Janaury 1993, I have decided to maintain the maximum level of support for large merchant ships at 9 per cent. for 1993. I have similarly decided that maximum support for small ships will be maintained at 4·5 per cent. These levels, which are the maximum permitted by the European Commission, are inclusive of shipbuilder's relief at 2 per cent.

Monopolies and Mergers

Mr. Booth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he intends to make a further reference of a public sector body to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission under section 11 of the Competition Act 1980.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: As part of its regular programme of efficiency studies of publicly owned bodies, the Commission has been asked to look into the service provided by the British Waterways Board. The formal reference was made today. It asks the MMC to look at whether, in carrying out its functions under the relevant

legislation, the BWB could improve efficiency, reduce costs and improve the quality of service provided. The terms of reference will be laid in the House of Commons Library.

Pension Funds

Ms. Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the percentage level of the employer's contribution to the pension funds of *(a)* British Telecom, *(b)* British Gas and *(c)* the electricity boards in the year prior to privatisation.

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* Percentage levels of the employer's contribution in these companies in the year prior to the privatisation of each were:

British Telecommunications Staff Superannuation Scheme: 15·5 per cent. (FY 1983-1984).
British Gas Corporation Pension Scheme (Industrial): 6 per cent. (FY 1986-1987).
British Gas Staff Pension Scheme: 23·4 per cent. (FY 1986-1987).
Electricity Supply Pension Scheme: 37 per cent. (FY 1989-1990).

Energy Technology Support Unit

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of research contracts administered by his Department's energy technology support unit in *(a)* 1980 to 1989 and *(b)* 1990 to 1993 have been contracted to researchers employed by ETSU; and if he will list the annual value to the ETSU for each year since 1980 of research contracts supported by external resources which have been undertaken in-house.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* As manager of research programmes, ETSU is precluded from contracting research work under those programmes to its own employees.

Before 1989, the Department of Energy was ETSU's sole customer. Since 1989, ETSU has offered its programme management, technology transfer, and strategic studies capabilities to United Kingdom and overseas Government Departments and to the Commission of the European Communities. Income from these new sources was £78,000 in 1989-90, £511,000 in 1990-91, and £1·062 million in 1991-92.

Regional Development Fund

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met EC Commissioner Millan; what plans he has to meet Commissioner Millan to discuss the United Kingdom's allocation under the European regional development fund; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend has had no formal meetings with Commissioner Millan.

I last met Commissioner Millan on 14 December 1992. I have no definite plans for our next meeting.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Pest Control

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee (1) which Department of the House has responsibility for pest control in the precincts of the Palace of Westminster;

(2) what arrangements are currently in place for the prevention of mice infestation in the House; which company currently holds the contract; for how long that company has held the contract; and when it was last put out to tender.

Mr. Ray Powell: These are primarily matters for the Serjeant at Arms and I shall ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Written Answers

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council what action he proposes to take in respect of the practice used by Ministers of submitting written answers, pursuant to earlier questions already answered.

Mr. Newton: This issue is addressed in the Third Report of the Select Committee on Procedure, Session 1990-91, paragraphs 128-130. I am considering the Committee's recommendations and will respond shortly.

Oral Answers

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the names of hon. Members who have in this Parliament had a question to the Secretary of State for Employment for oral Answer listed on the Order Paper among the top 12 more than three times.

Mr. Newton: None.

SCOTLAND

Prisoners' Ombudsman

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to establish a prisoners' ombudsman.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Consideration is at present being given to the comments received in response to publication in September 1992 of the Scottish prison service working group report "Right and Just" which made recommendations for reform of the procedures under which prisoners in Scotland are able to make requests and complaints and to air grievances. An announcement on the shape of new procedures will be made when that consideration is complete.

Hospital Staff

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the numbers of nurses, doctors, administrative staff, senior managers and domestic staff employed in each hospital, *(a)* at the nearest available date and *(b)* three years ago.

Mr. Stewart: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Limited statistics for NHS employed staff are, however, shown by hospital in the 1991-92 edition of the "Scottish Health Service Costs", a copy of which is available in the Library. Comparable data for earlier years are not available in this published series.

Police Interview Notes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland in how many instances in each of the past three years criminal convictions have been referred back to the Court of Appeal following re-examination of the original police interview notes.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* None.

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many requests have been made to the police in each of the past three years for the disclosure of original interview notes in cases where criminal charges have been brought; in how many instances these requests have been denied; and for what reasons.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* This information is not held in a readily retrievable form.

Health Service (Employment Protection)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish all correspondence between the Scottish health service and *(a)* Tayside health board and *(b)* the Dundee hospital trust relating to (i) the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations and (ii) the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill.

Mr. Stewart: Only two letters giving a legal view on the TUPE regulations 1981 have been issued from the central legal office of the NHS Scotland to Tayside health board. The advice given to the board was in general terms and did not involve the Dundee hospital trust.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Auditing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what contribution his Department made towards the report, "Environmental Auditing—an Introduction and Practical Guide", published by the British Library.

Mr. Maclean: None.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year *(a)* at year-by-year prices and *(b)* at current prices the total amount of moneys made available to the travel-to-work areas included in the assisted areas map since it was last reviewed in 1984.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available. My Department does not make moneys available with reference to travel-to-work areas.

Canada Geese Eggs

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many licences he has issued in each of the last five years for the taking or destroying of Canada goose eggs; and how many eggs were reported as having been dealt with under those licences.

Mr. Maclean: Information on licences issued to take or destroy Canada goose eggs in each of the years 1988, 1989, 1990 and 1991 is contained in the United Kingdom's annual derogation reports to the European Commission, copies of which are held in the Library of the House.

During 1992, 27 licences to take or destroy eggs were issued. Returns for the number of eggs dealt with are still awaited from some licence holders.

Child Protection, Lambeth

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the standard spending assessment component for services in Lambeth associated with child protection; and how that component compares with the standard spending assessments for the other Inner London boroughs expressed in the form which would be applicable to a standard population size.

Mr. Robin Squire: Child protection is one of many aspects of social services for children covered by the children's element of the standard spending assessment for personal social services. The amount of this element expressed in pounds per child under 18 for all London authorities is given in the table.

SSA for Social Services for children per child

Local authority	*£ child*
Greater London	
City of London	567
Camden	643
Greenwich	311
Hackney	828
Hammersmith and Fulham	736
Islington	711
Kensington and Chelsea	605
Lambeth	860
Lewisham	461
Southwark	620
Tower Hamlets	631
Wandworth	559
Westminster	627
Barking and Dagenham	230
Barnet	150
Bexley	107
Brent	416
Bromley	122
Croydon	206
Ealing	264
Enfield	148
Haringey	509
Harrow	104
Havering	103
Hillingdon	122
Hounslow	195
Kingston upon Thames	121
Merton	180
Newham	382
Redbridge	141
Richmond upon Thames	151
Sutton	127
Waltham Forest	299

PM10 Particulates

Ms. Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment at how many sites in the United Kingdom he plans to monitor for PM10 particulates; and how many local authorities monitor for PM10.

Mr. Maclean: The Department currently monitors PM10 particulates at eight sites in the United Kingdom, with a further four sites planned by the end of 1993. One local authority monitors PM10.

Thames Water Extraction

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the impact of water extraction from the River Thames on salination levels in the upper reaches of the river.

Mr. Maclean: None: this is a matter for the National Rivers Authority to monitor.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in the Ordnance Survey since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: None of the projects in Ordnance Survey's market-testing programme since November 1991, which involves exposing in-house functions to competition, has yet reached the stage where a contract or service level agreement has been awarded. Functions and services which are currently being market tested are computer operations, printing and graphic reproduction, elements of office services, site security and catering.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from Ordnance Survey since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Baldry: Since November 1992, Ordnance Survey has contracted out the following functions without market testing an in-house bid.

(1) Part of the Internal Audit programme, particularly computer audit. The successful contractor was Ernst and Young. No in-house bid was sought since the work contracted out supplemented the continuing in-house programme and the intention was to assess the quality of contracted out audits prior to full market testing.

(2) Bulk enveloping and despatch of invoices and publicity material. The successful contractor was the local Sheltered Workshop (SIT). The work was contracted out to meet peak demands and to make better use of directly employed staff.

Ordnance Survey has contracted out a proportion of its large scale map digitising programme for a number of years and this has been ongoing since November 1991. The reason for contracting out is that the digitising programme has a finite life, it will be completed by 1995, and it was not economic to invest in recruitment and training of extra staff and the associated expensive equipment for such a short period. The contractors involved are

BKS Surveys
Consult
Gardline Surveys
Geografix
Glen Computing
Graphical Data Capture
Ground Modelling
Grove Consultants
JTC Computer Systems
Laserscan
Mason Land Surveys
QC Data
Summerside Associates
Survey International
Survey and Development Services
Taywood Data Graphics

In addition, a large part of the in-house task associated with warehousing materials and equipment has ceased as a result of the introduction of call-off contracts.

Ordnance Survey (Market Testing)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the firms of consultants used by Ordnance Survey as part of the market-testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The firms of consultants used by Ordnance Survey for work relating to the market-testing programme since November 1991 are P. Bacon Consultancy, Grosvenor Consultancy Services Ltd. and Coopers and Lybrand. The total cost of consultancy advice is estimated to be of the order of £40,000.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff in Ordnance Survey are assigned to the market-testing programme; how much the programme has cost Ordnance Survey since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: One person controls Ordnance Survey's market-testing programme, in conjunction with other duties. A number of line managers are involved in individual market testing projects as part of their normal duties. The exact amount of time spent on these duties is not recorded and the cost of the programme could be calculated only at disproportionate cost.

Mobile Homes

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what reasons underlie the ineligibility of owners of residential mobile homes for disabled facilities grant aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Under part VIII of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, a property is eligible for disabled facilities grant only if it is a dwelling and the owner has an interest in the land on which it is located. Mobile home owners have difficulty in meeting these legal requirements. We are considering whether ways can be found of extending minor works assistance to mobile home owners for small repairs and adaptations.

Local Government Boundary Commission

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were his reasons for *(a)* accepting report 665 of the Local Government Boundary Commission and *(b)* not giving detailed reasons for his decision when he announced it on 23 February.

Mr. Robin Squire: The recommendations from the Local Government Boundary Commission were accepted because it was considered to be in the interests of effective and convenient local government to have the existing airport in one local government area. We carefully considered the commission's recommendations and all representations on them. We reached our conclusion on a balance of judgment and, as has been the consistent practice in such cases, we do not propose to set out our reasoning in greater detail.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to include an element based on the percentage of people with a long-term sickness or disability in SSA calculations in future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The need to incorporate in SSAs for 1994-95 information from the 1991 census provides an opportunity to take a more wide-ranging look at their composition. My right hon. and learned Friend has said that he will consider any representations for changes which are made to him.

Wetlands

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what impact the proposed new environmental protection agency will have on determining environmental policy towards wetlands.

Mr. Maclean: The proposed new Environment Agency will bring together all of the functions of the National Rivers Authority, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the waste regulation functions of local authorities to form an integrated body. It will have no responsibility for determining environmental policy towards wetlands, but may provide information on matters within its responsibilities. The Government are committed to the wise use of wetlands as part of their obligations under the Ramsar convention on wetlands of international importance.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much English Nature spent on management agreements that involved the protection and management of wetland areas in the last financial year.

Mr. Maclean: English Nature spent £5,735,359 on management agreements in 1991-92. A breakdown of that expenditure for all 1,584 agreements by habitat type is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However £49,404 was spent on new agreements involving wetland or partial wetland sites concluded in 1992-93 where the annual payment exceeded £2,000 or where a lump sum payment in excess of £10,000 was made.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all important wetland sites designated under the Ramsar convention to date.

Mr. Maclean: I was pleased to announce the designation of Roydon Common, Gibraltar Point and the Nene Washes as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar convention, and the extension of the existing Ouse Washes Ramsar site, on 5 March 1993. The United Kingdom has now listed 62 Ramsar sites, including one site in a dependent territory, the Turks and Caicos Islands. Details of the sites are as follows.

United Kingdom sites listed as wetlands of international importance under the RAMSAR convention

Name	*County/Region*	*Date designated*
1. Bridgwater Bay	Somerset	5 January 1976
2. Bure Marshes	Norfol	5 January 1976
3. Cors Fochno and Dyfi	Dyfed, Gwynedd and Powys	5 January 1976
4. Hickling Broad and Horsey Mere	Norfolk	5 January 1976
5. Lindafarne	Northumberland	5 January 1976 (1 11 March 1992)
6. Loch Druidibeg, Loch a'Machair and Loch Stilligary	Western Isles	5 January 1976
7. Loch Leven	Tayside	5 January 1976
8. Loch Lomond	Strathclyde and Central	5 January 1976
9. Lough Neagh and Lough Beg	Antrim, Londonderry Tyrone, Armagh and Down	5 January 1976
10. Minsmere-Walberswick	Suffolk	5 January 1976 (1 19 May 1992)
11. North Norfolk Coast	Norfolk	5 January 1976 (1 20 January 1989)
12. Ouse Washes	Cambridgeshire and Norfolk	5 January 1976 (1 5 March 1993)
13. Rannoch Moor	Tayside	5 January 1976
14. Abberton Reservoir	Essex	24 July 1981
15. Cairngorm Lochs	Grampian and Highland	24 July 1981
16. Claish Moss	Highland	24 July 1981
17. Loch Lintrathen	Tayside	24 July 1981
18. Rostherne Mere	Cheshire	24 July 1981
19. Silver Flowe	Dumfries and Galloway	24 July 1981
20. Chesil Beach and the Fleet	Dorset	17 July 1985
21. The Dee Estuary	Merseyside, Cheshire and Clwyd	17 July 1985
22. Derwent Ings	North Yorkshire and Humberside	17 July 1985
23. Holborn Moss	Northumberland	17 July 1985
24. Irthinghead Mires	Cumbria and Northumberland	17 July 1985
25. The Swale	Kent	17 July 1985
26. Alt Estuary	Merseyside	28 November 1985
27. Leighton Moss	Lancashire	29 November 1985
28. Martin Mere	Lancashire	28 November 1985
29. Loch Eye	Highland	23 September 1986
30. Loch Skene	Grampian	23 September 1986
31. Rokliffe Marshes (part of Upper Solway Flats and Marshes)	Cumbria	23 September 1986
32. Chichester and Langstone Harbours	Hampshire/West Sussex	26 October 1987
33. Upper Severn Estuary	Gloucestershire	5 February 1988
34. The Wash	Lincolnshire/Norfolk	30 March 1988
35. Pagham Harbour	West Sussex	30 March 1988
36. Din Moss—Hoselaw Loch	Borders	14 July 1988
37. Gladhouse Reservoir	Lothian	14 July 1988
38. Bridgend Flats, Islay	Strathclyde	14 July 1988
39. Duich Moss, Islay	Strathclyde	14 July 1988
40. Gruinart Flats	Strathclyde	14 July 1988
41. Fala Flow	Midlothian	25 April 1990
42. Glac-na-Criche	Islay	25 April 1990
43. Feur Lochain	Islay	25 April 1990
44. Loch an Duin	North Uist	25 April 1990
45. North, Middle and East Caicos Islands	Turks and Caicos	27 June 1990

Name	County/Region	Date designated
46. Redgrave and South Lopham Fens	Norfolk/Suffolk	15 February 1991
47. Rutland Water	Leicestershire	4 October 1991
48. Llyn Idwal	Gwynedd	7 November 1991
49. Llyn Tegid	Gwynedd	7 November 1991
50. Esthwaite Water	Cumbria	7 November 1991
51. Walmore Common	Gloucester	5 December 1991
52. Exe Estuary	Devon	11 March 1992
53. Old Hall Marshes	Essex	11 March 1992
54. Chippenham Fen	Cambridgeshire	11 March 1992
55. Burry Inlet	Dyfed/West Glamorgan	14 July 1992
56. Loch Ken and Dee Marshes	Dumfries and Galloway	31 August 1992
57. Loch Spynie	Grampian	31 August 1992
58. Cors Caron	Dyfed	28 September 1992
59. Upper Solway Flats and Marshes	Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway	30 November 1992
60. Roydon Common	Norfolk	5 March 1993
61. Nene Washes	Cambridgeshire	5 March 1993
62. Gibraltar Point (Wash Phase II)	Lincolnshire	5 March 1993

[1] Extended.

Employment Protection Regulations

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library copies of all circulars and other advice issued by his Department concerning the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive.

Mr. Robin Squire: No such circular has been issued to local authorities. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State intends to make a statement on this matter shortly.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to introduce legislation to enact for England and Wales provisions in respect of the authority for water companies or others to cause a disconnection of a domestic consumer's water supply along the lines of those in force in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* No. It is right that bills should be paid, but equally that companies should deal sympathetically with customers who are having difficulty meeting their bills. Significant safeguards exist to protect domestic customers of water companies in England and Wales who cannot pay, rather than will not pay, from the prospect of disconnection. In Scotland water supply is at present a local authority service.

Radiation Leak, Sellafield

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring has been carried out of the areas affected by the radioactive contamination resulting from the recent leak at Sellafield with regard to possible dangers to health.

Mr. Soames *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

This Department and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, as joint authorising Departments for the disposal of radioactive waste from licensed nuclear sites, place a statutory obligation on operators to carry out monitoring of discharges and environmental radioactivity as a condition of authorisations. When British Nuclear Fuel Ltd's monitoring at Sellafield indicated the recent enhanced discharges of radioactivity, the company carried out high-volume air sampling and extra sampling of milk and grass in the areas affected.

This Department samples milk in the vicinity of the Sellafield site as part of our routine surveillance activity near all licensed nuclear sites. Following these incidents we have also analysed grass samples and our dry cloth deposition collectors located around the site which provide data on airborne activity.

On the basis of the results of this sampling, our scientific assessment is that the radiological impact from these discharges to the most exposed members of the public is no more than 10 microSieverts. By contrast the dose to members of the public from normal background radioactivity is 2,200 microSieverts a year.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what implications, in terms of time and content, her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution inquiry into the recent radiation leak at Sellafield will have for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution consultation into the proposed radioactive waste discharge authorisations from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd., Sellafield site; and if he will make it his policy that no decision will be made on the draft authorisations until the results of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution inquiry into the leak are known.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution currently does not expect the investigations into the recent incidents at Sellafield to affect the timetable for assessing the results of the consultation exercise on the proposed new authorisations at Sellafield. HMIP and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food still currently expect to submit their report on the consultation process in early April 1993.

Any decisions on the draft authorisations will take account of lessons arising from the investigations.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Howard: The staff in my Department and its agencies are conditioned to work 41 hours per week in London and 42 hours per week outside London. Both include five hours per week for lunch. In addition, if local management agree, staff can join the flexible working hours scheme. Staff who join the scheme must start work between 7.30 am and 10.00 am and must leave between 4.00pm and 6.30pm. The scheme is shortly to be amended so that staff will have the flexibility to leave between 4.00pm and 8.30pm.

The hours worked by staff on any particular day is for local management to decide. This they will do taking into account the requirement, where necessary, to cater for the needs of the public. I see no need to undertake a survey.

TRANSPORT

British Rail National Timetable

4. **Mr. Hayes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about a British Rail national timetable; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have received a number of letters about future arrangements for a national rail timetable and have given a clear assurance that a national timetable will continue to be published.

Channel Tunnel

7. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his timetable for the establishment of freight terminals for channel tunnel traffic in the west midlands.

Mr. Freeman: This is a matter for British Rail. I understand that it expects the Birmingham Euroterminal, serving the whole of the midlands, to be ready when the channel tunnel opens.

Cambridge (Southern Relief Road)

12. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of Cambridgeshire county council's plans for a Cambridge southern relief road.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: This road would form part of the local road network which is the responsibility of the county council. My Department has had continuing discussions with the county council on its proposed Cambridge strategy, including the relief road.

Young Drivers (Casualties)

13. **Mr. Gallie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to introduce a package to reduce casualties among new and young drivers.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We are considering a number of possible measures to improve the safety of newly qualified drivers and hope to consult on proposals shortly.

Cleethorpes-Newark Line

14. **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to include the Cleethorpes-Newark line in his east coast franchising proposals.

Mr. Freeman: When my right hon. Friend announced on 2 February the first services to be prepared for franchising British Rail had already announced its decision to withdraw its direct inter-city service from London to Cleethorpes in May. The franchise announced for the inter-city east coast main line does not therefore include the line from Newark to Cleethorpes.

Civil Aviation Authority

15. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to review the powers of the Civil Aviation Authority.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has no such plans.

Shipping Accidents

16. **Mr. Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he has taken at the International Maritime Organisation to improve the compensation arrangements appertaining to shipping accidents.

Mr. MacGregor: The United Kingdom took a leading role in the adoption at the IMO last year of protocols ensuring higher limits of liability in the event of an oil spill. We are also working at the IMO to develop a convention to ensure high levels of compensation in the event of a chemical spill.

Waterloo-Exeter Line

17. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects new trains to be in service on the Waterloo-Exeter route.

Mr. Freeman: The first new train for the Waterloo-Exeter line was delivered to British Rail on 23 January. British Rail expects it to enter service later this month. The remaining trains should be in service by July.

A550 Extension

18. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the cost of the proposed A550 extension.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The combined estimated cost of the two stages of the planned A550 improvement between Deeside park and the M53 is £49·2 million.

Breathalyser Tests

19. **Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many breathalyser tests were carried out on motorists in England and Wales over the Christmas and new year period; how many of these were positive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A total of 59,069 tests were carried out, of which 4,248, or 7·2 per cent., were positive. The proportion of positive tests was slightly lower than for the previous Christmas. There has been a continuing downward trend in drink-drive accidents; the number of fatalities has more than halved in the last decade, to around 700 in 1991. We are determined to get this number even lower.

Railways (Scotland)

20. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he next intends to meet the Board of ScotRail to discuss railway matters in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: I have no plans to meet the board of ScotRail. At my regular meetings with the chairman of the British Railways Board we discuss a wide range of railway

matters including those involving Scotland. I plan to visit Scotland later this month when I hope to meet the ScotRail management team.

Road Accidents

21. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the most recent progress in the aim to reduce the numbers of road accidents by one third between the years 1985 and 2000.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The aim is to reduce road accident casualties by one third by the year 2000, compared with the annual average for 1981-85. The provisional figures for the 12 months ending in September 1992 show that fatalities are down by 21 per cent., serious injuries by 33 per cent. and all casualties by 3 per cent. on the target baseline.

Bypasses

22. **Mr. Page:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many bypasses are planned to be started in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Nineteen of the 41 new national road programme starts announced by my right hon. Friend on 4 February are bypasses and most of the others will remove traffic from local communities. In addition, local authorities plan to start another 24 bypasses on their roads.

West Coast Main Line

23. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the chairman of British Rail to discuss investment plans for the west coast main line.

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the oral answer my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport gave to the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) earlier today.

Motorway Repairs (Land Rental Contracts)

24. **Mr. Thomason:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect that the introduction of lane rental contracts for contractors undertaking motorway repairs has had on the speed of repairs.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We estimate that lane rental contracts are completed some 30 per cent. faster than conventional contracts.

Rail Privatisation

25. **Mr. Charles Kennedy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received on the impact of rail privatisation on the rail links to the north and the west of the Scottish highlands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I met the hon. Members for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), and for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston), together with councillors and officials of the Highland regional council on 10 February to discuss the implications of passenger rail franchising for the highland lines.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 2 February, we intend to franchise ScotRail passenger services as a whole. The east coast main line InterCity services are also being prepared for franchising, and that includes services to Inverness. Fort William will continue to be served by the west coast main line InterCity services when they come to be franchised.

Subsidy will be made available to support franchised ScotRail services as at present and InterCity services if necessary. Service levels, which will be based on the timetable being operated by British Rail immediately prior to franchising, will be written into legally binding contracts between the franchising director and the franchised passenger train operators.

Road Programme

26. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the economic effects of his road programme in the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The road programme aims as one of its objectives to assist economic growth by reducing transport costs. The programme of construction meets the needs of industry and other road users through the provision of a modern strategic road network. The benefit which roads generate for the economy is assessed by the use of cost-benefit techniques of economic appraisal.

In his statement to the House on 4 February, the Secretary of State pointed out that the 41 schemes due to start next financial year will bring substantial economic, safety and environmental benefits to road users and the country as a whole. The benefits of these new schemes in terms of accidents avoided and time savings to road users has been assessed at £2·5 billion.

Concessionary Bus Passes

27. **Mr. Denham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he proposes to take to promote the availability of concessionary bus passes for pensioners.

Mr. Freeman: The promotion of concessionary bus passes for pensioners is a matter for local authorities.

Public Transport (Women's Safety)

28. **Ms. Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to improve women's safety on public transport systems.

Mr. Norris: My Department has a long-standing commitment to improve passenger safety on public transport.

The remit of my Department's standing panel on assaults on bus staff has been extended to include the monitoring of data on assaults on bus passengers and possible remedial measures. The panel has recommended that bus operators install radios and video cameras in their vehicles to protect both employees and passengers.

We have also co-sponsored the passenger guidance leaflet published by the Suzy Lamplugh Trust, "Travel Safely by Public Transport". The leaflet contains practical safety advice for women using all forms of public transport.

Concessionary Rail Travel

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 29 January, *Official Report*, column *869*, how many concessionary rail passes were issued to British Rail staff, their dependants and ex-British Rail staff in each of the last five years; and what is the number of British Rail staff dependants who receive concessionary rail travel.

Mr. Freeman: The numbers of staff, including dependants, entitled to concessionary travel facilities, as at 9 January, were given to the hon. Member in my answer of 29 January, at column *869*. Passes are issued to all those entitled on an annual basis and comparable figures for earlier years could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

British Rail Employees

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are employed by British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: The figure reported to my Department on 11 February was 131,651.

Red Route, West Wickham

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what traffic surveys were conducted in West Wickham high street before the formulation of the proposals to designate this stretch of the A232 as a red route.

Mr. Norris: None. As we made clear in our consultation document in January last year, the basis for the composition of the red route network was the existing primary route network, which consists of the best routes for traffic entering and leaving London and making longer distance journeys within it. The A232 West Wickham high street is a primary route.

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment has been made of the likely increase in traffic growth through West Wickham high street following its designation as part of the A232 red route.

Mr. Norris: This is a matter for the London borough of Bromley to consider in preparing the red route local plan. If it foresees any increase in traffic, the traffic director would expect the local plan to include offsetting benefits in terms of reduced congestion, improved road safety, or environmental improvements on nearby roads.

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will instruct the Traffic Director to pay an official visit to West Wickham high street before finalising his decision to designate this stretch of the A232 as a red route.

Mr. Norris: The A232 West Wickham high street was designated a red route by the Secretary of State on 11 June 1992.

I understand that the traffic director and his assistant director south-east visited West Wickham high street prior to attending a meeting of the London borough of Bromley's technical services committee on 20 January. The assistant director has also visited West Wickham high street on several previous occasions to inspect traffic conditions during the morning peak, lunchtime and early evening periods.

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration has been given to a possible diversion of the proposed A232 red route from West Wickham high street in order to meet the objections raised by local residents.

Mr. Norris: We carefully considered the London borough of Bromley's alternative proposal that the red route should by-pass West Wickham high street. We concluded, however, that no change should be made to our original proposal.

Sir John Hunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received with regard to the proposed red route through West Wickham high street; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: We have received 517 representations and in addition four petitions containing a total of 341 names.

I am satisfied that the high street forms part of an existing strategic route through south London which will benefit from the introduction of red route measures.

Road Building and Management

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much was spent on road building and management in real terms *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* in 1992.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: In 1991-92 prices, £1,035 million was spent in 1979-80 and £1,889 million in 1991-92 on new construction and capital and current maintenance of national roads in England.

Transport Expenditure

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the ratio of road to public transport expenditure by his Department *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in London.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Comprehensive details of the Government's expenditure on transport for the three-year period 1993-94 to 1995-96 are contained in the Department of Transport report 1993, Cm 2206. In this period, planned spending on roads amounts to £8,181 million and on public transport £6,760 million, a ratio of 1.21 to 1. Expenditure on transport in London is not identified separately and it would be difficult to produce reliable and meaningful figures. However, it is clear that a much higher proportion of transport expenditure in London is on public transport than is the case nationally.

Channel Tunnel (East Coast Link)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects passenger services via the channel tunnel to operate along the east coast main line; whether designs for power-cars and rolling stock for such services have been finalised; and when he expects orders for this rolling stock to be placed.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail expects to start operating international daytime services on the east coast main line towards the end of 1995. The dedicated trainsets for these services were ordered in December 1991.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a map showing the rail route, together with speed restrictions, to be followed from the east coast main line to Kensington Olympia for onward service to the channel tunnel; if he will outline all track and signalling works necessary for this route to be followed, stating in each case when such works are to be, or were started, and when they will be completed.

Mr. Freeman: These are operational matters for British Rail. The Department does not hold the information requested.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects freight services via the channel tunnel to operate along the east coast main line; whether locomotives for such services have been ordered; and when they are expected to begin service.

Mr. Freeman: The dedicated class 92 locomotives are on order and are due to be delivered from the autumn of 1994. The railways should, however, be in a position to run international freight trains from the time the tunnel opens by using other locomotives to provide traction through the tunnel.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the tender list for sections 102 to 112 of the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: No, this is a matter for London Underground Ltd. I understand that it is prepared to release such information in appropriate cases, but only after the award of contracts.

East Coast Line (Electrification)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the sources of funding for the east coast line electrification.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail investment is funded by a mixture of Government grants and loans and its own internal resources. It is for BR to decide how these funds are allocated to particular projects. In addition, the east coast line electrification project received grant aid from the European regional development fund.

Travelcards

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the future of travelcards in London; and what steps he is taking to ensure the continued availability of such cards after bus deregulation and rail privatisation.

Mr. Norris: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about this. The Government are discussing with London public transport operators what developments in joint ticketing arrangements, such as travelcard, will best meet the future needs of passengers and operators. In the light of travelcard's popularity, private sector bus and rail operators will be keen for commercial reasons to offer such a facility.

British Rail Pension Fund

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will outline the restrictions applying to the purposes to which British Rail pensions fund assets may be applied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: This is entirely a matter for the trustees of the British Rail pension schemes, acting in accordance with the powers within the various trust deeds and scheme rules.

Helicopters, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to publish the findings of the study into sites for a permanent helicopter base in London.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* The Secretary of State hopes to receive the report of the London heliport study working group in the summer and to publish the report as soon as possible thereafter.

NORTHERN IRELAND

National Anthem

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in which newspapers and magazines the Community Relations Commission advertised its research post on practice relating to the playing of the national anthem.

Mr. Hanley: The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council placed advertisements in the *Belfast Telegraph* and *Fortnight* magazine for an independent consultant(s) to carry out research on flags and emblems.

Health and Social Services Trusts

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what financial basis property currently vested in the Department of Health and Social Services will be transferred to HSS trusts.

Mr. Hanley: When an HSS trust is set up, the assets it needs for its functions are transferred to it and it takes legal ownership of them. Land and buildings held for operational use are valued by the Valuation and Lands Office at open market value for existing use. This valuation, less the value of any liabilities transferred to the trust, constitute the trust's originating capital debt.

Social Security

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available for the Asylum road, Derry, Lisnagelvin, Limavady and Strabane social security offices to indicate the numbers in receipt of income support, the respective numbers receiving each of the income support premiums and the numbers receiving unemployment benefit without income support.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. Wylie to Mr. John Hume, dated 3 March 1993:

As I am responsible for Social Security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question on the numbers in receipt of Income Support, the respective numbers receiving each of the Income Support premiums and the numbers receiving Unemployment Benefit without Income Support at Asylum Road, Lisnagelvin, Limavady and Strabane has been passed to me for reply.

The most recent information available is attached.

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report and copies will be placed in the Library

Income support payments—premiums and unemployment benefit in Asylum Road, Lisnagelvin, Limavady and Strabane

	Name of office			
	Asylum Road	*Lisnagelvin*	*Limavady*	*Strabane*
Number in receipt of Income Support	12,092	5,884	3,667	6,593
Number in receipt of pensioner premium	892	562	378	816
Number in receipt of enhanced pensioner premium	229	176	100	216
Number in receipt of higher pensioner premium	677	509	364	674
Number in receipt of disability premium	1,037	464	303	596
Number in receipt of lone parent premium	2,673	935	450	749
Number in receipt of family premium	1,274	701	602	889
Number in receipt of Unemployment Benefit without Income Support	494	292	315	177

Note: There are another three premiums i.e. disabled child premium, severe disability premium and the carer premium. Unfortunately, no statistical data is held on the number of customers in receipt of these premiums.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the processing of disability living allowance applications indicating average processing times per component, progress on the backlog of applications and any special measures taken.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. Wylie to Mr. John Hume, dated 3 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am replying, therefore, to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland concerning Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

As you know, we conducted a highly successful publicity campaign to launch the new disability benefits in Northern Ireland. In addition, we wrote to some 55,000 existing Attendance Allowance and Mobility Allowance recipients to invite them, where appropriate, to claim extra money under DLA. Take up campaigns were also run by other organisations to encourage claims to Attendance Allowance and Mobility Allowance before they were replaced. All of these activities attracted a much larger number of applications in the early stages than was expected. Although we had expected an increase in applications the response far exceeded our forecasts.

The surge of applications meant that we were fully stretched to cope with the volume of work. When I wrote to you in July 1992, I explained that appropriate measures had been taken to tackle the situation, including the recruitment of additional staff and working extensive overtime. Significant inroads have been made into the number of new DLA claims on hand. During the period from February 1992 to February 1993, 28,000 new claims were received and of these 20,000 have been cleared. In addition, almost all of the 8,000 claims received from existing beneficiaries have been cleared. Some 3,300 applications for review have been received of which 1,500 have been cleared.

You asked about the average processing times per component. A claim to DLA is a claim for the benefit as a whole and not for a specific component or level of component of the benefit. The primary target set for the clearance of DLA claims is 60 per cent. of claims to be cleared in 30 days. We met the target in November and December 1992 but the average performance since April 1992 to date works out at 25 per cent. cleared in 30 days. While we are still some way, therefore, from meeting the target on a full year basis, the situation is improving and action is being taken to further reduce the backlog and thereby significantly improve the clearance times.

The phased introduction of computerisation from October 1992 has speeded up the payment process and will lead to much greater efficiency when the conversion from the clerical to the computer system is completed at the end of March. There will always be, some case of course, where further enquiries have to be made or medical examinations arranged. While these have been reduced to manageable proportions, there has been a recent rise of some 50 per cent. in new claims with around 800 claims being received each week. An additional 40 staff were recruited in January this year to deal with the work on hand and a dedicated telephone section has been set up to help deal with customers' enquiries.

I very much regret that, despite our best efforts, the service to many of our disabled customers has fallen far short of what they should receive. Although the intake of new claims has risen substantially, I am monitoring the situation closely and I expect that, as a result of the measures being taken, all backlogs will be cleared by April.

I hope this is helpful.

Mr. Hume: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information is available to compare application rates for each component of disability living allowance with those for attendance allowance and mobility allowance, award ratios by rate and review/appeal ratios.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A Wylie to Mr. John Hume, dated 3 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am replying, therefore, to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland concerning application rates for Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance and Mobility Allowance.

Firstly, I should explain that a claim for Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a claim for benefit as a whole and not for a specific component or level of component. In addition, in comparing Attendance Allowance prior to April 1992 and DLA, it should be noted that Attendance Allowance was then also available to people aged under 65 years of age.

Bearing this in mind, in 1991 there were 18,600 claims for Attendance Allowance and 7,800 claims for Mobility Allowance. From February 1992 to February 1993 there were 36,000 claims for DLA and between April 1992 and January 1993 there were 15,400 claims for Attendance Allowance which is now only available to people aged 65 or over.

In terms of benefit awarded, the success rate for Attendance Allowance and Mobility Allowance in 1991 was 53 per cent. and 60 per cent. respectively. The success rate to date for new claims to DLA is 79 per cent. and for review applications 65 per cent.

As regards reviews and appeals the details are as follows:

	Numbers
1991	
Attendance Allowance	3,116
Mobility Allowance	4,036
1992-93	
DLA	3,500

I hope this is helpful.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 2 February, *Official Report*, column 98, if he will provide the figures for ERDF funding for each year at 1984-85 prices.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* The following amounts were received from the European regional development fund at 1984-85 prices:

Financial year	*£ million 1984-85 prices*
1984-85	17
1985-86	17
1986-87	21
1987-88	40
1988-89	39
1989-90	31
1990-91	34
1991-92	33
1992-93	[1]78

[1] Estimated outturn.

Consultants

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to *(a)* Coopers and Lybrand management consultants, *(b)* Touche-Ross management consultants, *(c)* Price Waterhouse management consultants, *(d)* Ernst and Young management consultants, *(e)* Chrichton Roberts Ltd., *(f)* KPMG management consultants and *(g)* Leopold Joseph management consultants, with the total cost of the contracts with each contractor for (i) the past 12 months and (ii) 1991-92.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 24 February 1993]:* The information requested is as follows:

Consultant Coopers, Lybrand Deloitte

CONTRACTS AWARDED 1991-92
Calibration Report

Generator Consultants

Financial Services (Phase 1)

Universities Press (NI) Ltd.

Dungannon Meats

Walter Alexander

Salaries Information

Preparation of SLCO Business Plan

Telecoms and Electronics Components Strategy

Sector Review (Recycling)

Nectar Beauty Shops—Review of Core Business

Overview of Producer Services Sector

Full Business Appraisal of Munster Simms Engineering Ltd.

IT Provision in the Greater Belfast Area

Establishment of Labour Market Database

Local Labour Market Supply Newry and Mourne

Employment Service—Customer Satisfaction Survey

Monitoring MMB (NI) Commercial Subsidiary—Dromona Quality Foods

Financial Skills Training

Project Management Course

Internal Audit Course

Crisp—Economic Appraisal Course

Review of Government Legislation Course

Economic Appraisal Course

Project Sponsorship Course

Junior Management Development Programme

Investment Appraisal of Kircubbin Community Centre

Financial Information and Systems Review

Review of Single Terminal Access Point Implementation

HPSS Hospital In-Patient System

Update of 1990 Social Security Benefits: Computerisation Strategy Study

Investment Appraisal of Somme Heritage Centre

Quality Review of NUBS2 Implementation Plan

Project control Procedures—Training

Review of Senior Management FAMIS System

Management Support

Mental Health

Maternity

Project Approval

Community

Evaluation of MENCAP (Efficiency Scrutiny)

Development Work in Regional Information Strategy for HPSS

Tailoring of NHS Performance Indicator Package

Mental Health IT Evaluation Project

Information Systems Strategy

Land Registry Computerisation Project

Market Testing

Fintona Crisp

Validation of Market Testing Bids

IT Consultancy Information Systems Strategy

IT Consultancy Geographical Information Systems

Productivity Arrangements

Activities Related to the Establishment of a Government-owned Company

Project Management Assistance

TOTAL COST—£2,124,953

CONTRACTS AWARDED IN LAST 12 MONTHS
Monitoring MMB (NI) commercial subsidiary—Dromona quality foods

Five economic appraisals courses

Investment appraisal on Ulster peoples college

Strategic planning for implementation of operational strategy and non-operational strategy systems

Confirmation of current VAT procedures in the HPSS

Replacement mental health records system

IS strategy for child support agency

Mental health

Maternity

Project approval

Antrim area hospital

Developmental work on regional information strategy for HPSS

Review of senior management famis system

Full study report for the proposed new water and sewerage charging regime

Vehicle and plant accounting system

Pricing study

Donegall square appraisal

Northside economic appraisal

Full study report for financial systems

Review of industrial incentive scheme

IT consultancy information systems strategy

IT consultancy payroll/personnel

IT consultancy integrated computer system stage II

IT consultancy customer billing

IT consultancy commercial accounting

Validation of market testing bids

Development of management information systems

Rathlin island ferry service 1992-93 subsidy computation

Two junior financial management courses

Total Cost £666,047

Consultant—Touche Ross

CONTRACTS AWARDED 1991-92
Reporting Accountants

Fenaghy House

Lismona Wear

Study of light metal fabrication sector

Harland and Wolff appraisal of intervention aid claim capesize vessels

Production of database for NI trade director 1992 and 1993

Study/analysis NI perceived peripherality from european markets and effect on companies operating in NI

Pharmaceutical industry study

Aircraft management—search for alternative portfolio managers

Monitoring of Lummus Mackie modernisation and relocation plan

Sector review (plastics)

Development of management information system and planning framework for accounts

Info systems strategy study

Debenham training project

Development of a prototype client database

ICS project—central operations monitoring model

Laboratories

AMIS

Information systems scoping study

Information systems strategy for NI education service

TOTAL COST £1,124,230

CONTRACTS AWARDED IN LAST 12 MONTHS
Investment appraisal on Dungiven community centre

Investment appraisal on residential centre at St. Columb's nursing home

Investment appraisal on Inverbrena community centre

Commitment to quality

Strategic planning exercise

Benefit related study/projects

Business planning (DIS)

Laboratories

Making best use of ward nursing resources

Fintona Crisp

NI airports privatisation lead advisers

Water executive privatisation consultancy study

TOTAL COST £724,690

Consultant—Price Waterhouse
CONTRACTS AWARDED 1991-92

ISE Review

Preliminary feasibility study—Craftworks/NI fashion and design centre joint retail outlet

Review of costing and charging structures

Henry Denny

Presentation at association of economic reps

Academy Lithoplates

Company monitoring assignment Blackers Mill

Company monitoring assignment Aitch Holdings Ltd

Company appraisal—NIEX

Monitoring assignment—Blackers Mill

Development of industrial scholarship scheme

Evaluation of CEA programme and jobclub programme

Evaluation of NICD

Evaluation of responses to NICS Telecoms services study

Investment appraisal of provision of sports and leisure facilities at Brownlow Campus

Investment appraisal on a community relations development for the New Enterprise Trust

Purchaser and provider arrangements (SSI)

Business plan (DIS)

Day surgery study

Evaluation of NI association for mental health (efficiency scrutiny)

Evaluation of age concern

Evaluation of NICOD

Review of community unit information systems strategy

Evaluation of NI Association of Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Forum for Community Work Education

TOTAL COST £226,310

CONTRACTS AWARDED IN LAST 12 MONTHS

Competency frameworks for DHSS

Evaluation of CRC

Pay and grading

Regional finance—Training needs analysis

Business plan (DIS)

Bed management in acute hospitals study

Making best use of ward nursing resources

Efficiency scrutiny evaluation of the NI pre-school playgroups association

TOTAL COST £160,979

Consultants Ernest and Young

Contracts Awarded 91-92

Burrenddale Hotel

Company Monitoring Assignment—Platform

R. J. Hall

Express Foods

Foyle Meats

Elwood and Co

Securicor

Agriplex

Tayto/Pri-Sum

Company Appraisal Clarence Clothing

Company Appraisal Blackers Mill

Company Assignment Moy Central Manufacturing

Evaluation of Financial Implications of Relocating Clarence Clothing

Financial Review of Scandinavian Hosiery 1982 Ltd

Strategic Review of Platform Ltd

Search for Buyer for Clarence Clothing Company

Monitoring Assignment—Niex

Contracts (DIS)

Hilltown Crisp

Bannside Crisp

Draperstown Crisp

TOTAL COST £59,565

Contracts Awarded in Last 12 Months

Contracts (DIS)

Hilltown Crisp

Laganside Corporation Auditors

Consultants Ehrichton Roberts

Contracts Awarded 91-92

None

TOTAL COST Nil

Contracts awarded in the last 12 months

None

TOTAL COST Nil

Consultant KPMG
CONTRACTS AWARDED 1991-92
Financial services, market intelligence and prospect management system study

Financial services study

Assessment of future direction of YTP

Mackles

Flexibox

Treelinks

Organisational review of T and E agency

Forest service—options for change

Investment appraisal on Kells and Connor community centre

Investment appraisal on Corrymeela community centre

Report on human resource development training needs analysis

Grading seminar

Human resource strategy review

Contributions unit customer survey

Personnel review

Human resources development report

Usel consultancy study

Report on the impact on transport infrastructure and services on exporting companies in Northern Ireland

TOTAL COST 255,951

CONTRACTS AWARDED IN LAST 12 MONTHS
Castlewellan Crisp

Personnel review

Investment appraisal of residential centre at Ulster American Folk Park

Investment appraisal of education centre for the National Trust

TOTAL COST 16,797

Consultant Leopold Joseph
CONTRACTS AWARDED 1991-92
None

TOTAL COST Nil

CONTRACTS AWARDED IN LAST 12 MONTHS
Information not available on grounds of commercial confidentiality

EDUCATION

Parents Charter

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consultations he has had with representatives of parents concerning the parents charter.

Mr. Forth: Surveys commissioned by the Government have shown that most parents would welcome more information about schools. The parents charter explained parents' current rights, and promised improved access to information about the quality of information and the standards achieved in schools. The first set of comparative school performance tables were published last November and have been widely welcomed by parents and others.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) to which of the teachers' professional associations the consultation paper on a common funding formula for grant-maintained schools has been sent;

(2) to which of the teachers' professional associations he intends to send the rest of the series of consultation documents promised in the letter sent out on 18 December 1992 accompanying the consultation document on the common funding formula for grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Forth: The consultation paper which issued on 18 December, on a common funding formula for self-governing state—grant-maintained—schools, was addressed to local education authorities and self-governing schools. The teachers' professional associations were all sent the relevant press release. Copies of the paper were sent to any association on request. We are happy to add the name of any body or individual to the circulation list for further papers in the CFF series and to receive comments from them.

Teachers

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers retired at the statutory age of 60 for women or 65 years for men in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Forth: The teachers' superannuation scheme provides for retirement benefits to be paid to both men and women once they reach age 60. The table shows the number of women aged 60 and men aged 65 who retired during the financial years 1989-90 to date.

Year to March	*Women*	*Men*
1990	1,346	513
1991	1,348	477
1992	1,188	443
[1]1993	1,236	393

[1] Provisional.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many new teachers entered the profession in each year since 1989-90;

(2) how many new teachers are expected to enter the profession in 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the number of new entrants to full-time teaching in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector in England and Wales during 1989-90 and 1990-91. Information for later years is not yet available.

Year to March	*Number*
1990	15,300
[1]1991	16,900

[1] Provisional.

The number of new teachers who enter the profession in future years will depend on the recruitment decisions of employers and governors of schools with delegated budgets.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for the Education how many teachers aged over 50 years in maintained schools left the teaching profession *(a)* with enhanced compensation for redundancy and *(b)* with basic compensation for redundancy in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Forth: A complete set of data is not held centrally, but our records indicate that the number of teachers over age 50 who retired prematurely from maintained nursery, primary and secondary and special schools and received enhanced benefits was as follows:

Year to March	*Total*
1990	1,365
1991	1,562
1992	1,549
[1]1993	1,900

[1] Provisional.

Data relating to the number of teachers who left the profession with only basic compensation for redundancy are not collected centrally.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many teachers were employed in maintained schools in each year since 1988-89;

(2) how many teachers are expected to be employed in maintained schools in 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: The table shows the number of teachers employed in the maintained nursery, primary and secondary schools sector in England each January, including LEA-maintained and self-governing state schools.

	Full-time equivalent teachers
1989	397,410
1990	398,542
1991	394,945
1992	394,874

The number of teachers to be employed in LEA maintained and self-governing state schools in 1993-94 will depend on decisions taken by employers and by the governors of schools with delegated budgets.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers in maintained schools left the teaching profession with compensation for redundancy before reaching the age of 50 years in each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Forth: This information is not collected centrally.

Mr. O'Hara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers are expected to retire in 1992-93 having attained the age of 60 for women and 65 years for men.

Mr. Forth: In 1992-93, 400 men aged 65 and 1,300 women aged 60 are expected to retire from teaching.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Boswell: Staff in the Department work a total of 41 hours each week in London and 42 hours in Darlington at times designed to enable the office to fulfil its service to the public and to its Ministers. There is no significant difference in hours of attendance between Fridays and other weekdays.

Staff in the Teachers' Pensions Agency are conditioned to 42 hours. The agency has made public in the charterline the hours in which it is open for business. These are 8.30 am to 5 pm on Mondays to Thursdays, and 8.30 am to 4.30 pm on Fridays.

My right hon. Friend is proud of the record of officers in the Department, many of whom voluntarily work long hours to carry out his policies.

Hours of attendance in non-departmental public bodies are a matter for the individual body.

Student Maintenance

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what support will be given from public funds towards students' maintenance in the academic year 1993-94.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend's plans for maintenance provision through mandatory awards and loans for students domiciled in England and Wales are set out in the departmental report (Cm 2210) published last month, a copy of which is in the Library. The rates of awards and loans for 1993-94 will be included in regulations to be laid before the House in due course. Support is also available through discretionary awards made by local education authorities and through the access funds.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what research has been undertaken to investigate the extent of student financial hardship which has occurred during the current academic year.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has commissioned a survey of full-time undergraduate students' income and expenditure during the academic year 1992-93 including the 1992 summer vacation. The findings should be available later in 1993.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the value of the real level of the student grant for students living away from home and not studying in inner London for the year 1967-68, at 1993 prices, together with the current maximum basic grant.

Mr. Boswell: The basic mandatory grant for students living away from the parental home and studying outside London in the academic year 1992-93 is £2,265. Students in those circumstances will be able to take out loans of up to £715, making a total of £2,980. In 1967-68 the value of the corresponding mandatory grant was £2,964 at 1992-93 prices.

Schools (Ministerial Visits)

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which schools in Staffordshire he has visited since becoming Minister; and on what dates.

Mr. Patten: I have not yet had the opportunity of visiting schools in Staffordshire among the 31 that I have been to since becoming Secretary of State; however, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), visited the Maple Hayes Hall independent special school on 13 November 1992.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list, with dates, all the visits he has made as Minister to *(a)* primary schools and *(b)* secondary schools, identifying whether the school is local education authority maintained, voluntary aided or grant maintained.

Mr. Patten: The information requested is in the table:

Schools visited	*Date*
Appleton CE Primary School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire—LEA	2 October 1992
Dunmore Infants School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire—LEA	8 May 1992
Greenvale Primary School, Croydon—LEA	2 June 1992
The Hague Primary, Tower Hamlets—VA	8 March 1993
Lyne and Longcross First School, Surrey—LEA	30 June 1992
St. Edmund's RC Primary, Abingdon, Oxfordshire—LEA	1 May 1992
St. Peter's CE Primary School, Wootton, Oxfordshire—LEA	21 September 1992
Thomas Reade Primary School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire—LEA	10 July 1992
Frideswide Middle School, Oxfordshire—LEA	8 May 1992

Schools visited	Date
Netherlands Avenue Special School, Bradford—LEA	13 July 1992
Archbishop Blanch CE High School, Liverpool—VA	26 January 1993
Archbishop Tennison's CE Secondary School, Croydon—VA	2 June 1992
Bishop David Brown Secondary School, Surrey—LEA	30 June 1992
Bishop Thomas RC School, Lambeth—VA	5 March 1993
Cardinal Newman School, Hove, East Sussex—VA	October 1992
Cockshut Hill Secondary School, Birmingham—LEA	11 May 1992
Compton Secondary School, Finchley—LEA	21 October 1992
Culham European School, Oxfordshire—LEA	7 December 1992
Tesdale Special School, Abingdon, Oxfordshire—LEA	5 February 1993
Wimbledon College, Merton—VA	4 November 1992
Small Heath GM School, Birmingham—GM	11 May 1992
Marymount International School, Kingston—Independent	14 September 1992
Mayville High School, Portsmouth, Hampshire—Independent	7 July 1992
Mulberry School for Girls, Tower Hamlets—LEA	8 March 1993
Nottingham High School, Nottinghamshire—Independent	11 November 1992
Radley College, Oxfordshire—Independent	1 May 1992
School of St. Helan and St. Katherine, Oxfordshire—Independent	2 October 1992
Mary Hare Grammar School for the Deaf, Newbury, Berkshire—Non-Maintained Special School	10 February 1993
Bradford CTC, Bradford	13 July 1992
Djanogly CTC, Nottingham	11 November 1992
Leigh City CTC, Dartford, Kent	17 February 1993

Access Funds

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what level of access funds will be made available for the academic year 1993-94.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend's expenditure plans, as set out in the departmental report (Cm 2210) published last month, include access funds provision for institutions in England of £23·8 million in 1993-94. A copy of the report is in the Library.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Madel: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the oral statement of 2 March, *Official Report*, columns 139-43, by the Home Secretary on juvenile offending, which Department or Departments will be responsible for funding the new statutory duty on local education authorities to educate pupils who are not attending school.

Mr. Forth: The new duty will replace existing powers exercisable by local education authorities under section 56 of the Education Act 1944 and section 3 of the Education Act 1981. The Government do not expect this to lead to a significant increase in the costs of local education authorities.

Nursery Schools, London

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which five London boroughs currently have the highest percentage of children under five years registered as attending local authority funded nursery schools.

Mr. Forth: In January 1992, the latest date for which information is available, nine of the 33 boroughs in Greater London had no maintained nursery schools. Of the 24 authorities which did, the five with the highest percentages of under-fives attending maintained nursery schools were: Hammersmith and Fulham, 16 per cent.; Newham, 12 per cent.; Tower Hamlets, 11 per cent.; Greenwich, 10 per cent.; and Kensington and Chelsea, 9 per cent.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what percentage of children aged under five years attended local authority funded nursery schools in London in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1985 and *(d)* 1990;

(2) what percentage of children aged under five years in London attend local authority funded nursery schools.

Mr. Forth: In January 1980, 1985, 1990 and 1992—the latest date for which information is available—approximately 5 per cent. of the local population aged three and four attended maintained nursery schools in Greater London. The equivalent figure for January 1975 was approximately 4 per cent.

School Population

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the average size of each school population for which each education authority in England is responsible.

Mr. Forth: The average sizes of LEA-maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England in January 1992 are shown in the table.

Average number of pupils in LEA-maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England

January 1992

LEA	Primary	Secondary
City	221	—
Camden	256	931
Greenwich	269	930
Hackney	233	779
Hammersmith and Fulham	227	601
Islington	255	859
Kensington and Chelsea	229	773
Lambeth	240	625
Lewisham	271	752
Southwark	265	620
Tower Hamlets	272	774
Wandsworth	242	764
Westminster	215	905
Barking	285	1,146
Barnet	263	868
Bexley	270	844
Brent	335	823
Bromley	254	907
Croydon	256	701
Ealing	299	854
Enfield	327	985
Haringey	242	975
Harrow	357	739
Havering	261	838
Hillingdon	269	700
Hounslow	305	956
Kingston upon Thames	286	732

LEA	Primary	Secondary
Merton	302	608
Newham	359	1,004
Redbridge	327	1,020
Richmond upon Thames	259	896
Sutton	301	747
Waltham Forest	315	659
Birmingham	318	753
Coventry	267	957
Dudley	332	795
Sandwell	281	749
Solihull	272	947
Walsall	262	850
Wolverhampton	234	768
Knowsley	287	810
Liverpool	271	798
St. Helens	240	946
Sefton	286	817
Wirral	292	916
Bolton	251	977
Bury	229	691
Manchester	265	771
Oldham	239	1,056
Rochdale	276	896
Salford	255	621
Stockport	223	1,002
Tameside	270	700
Trafford	252	689
Wigan	239	855
Barnsley	217	806
Doncaster	231	608
Rotherham	210	996
Sheffield	253	746
Bradford	240	511
Calderdale	205	764
Kirklees	221	699
Leeds	250	527
Wakefield	219	5e3
Gateshead	213	889
Newcastle upon Tyne	262	750
North Tyneside	261	535
South Tyneside	253	823
Sunderland	279	1,092
Isles of Scilly	43	112
Avon	211	885
Bedfordshire	188	616
Berkshire	218	753
Buckinghamshire	212	750
Cambridgeshire	218	893
Cheshire	191	892
Cleveland	320	744
Cornwall	157	904
Cumbria	136	701
Derbyshire	184	922
Devon	174	831
Dorset	221	651
Durham	187	823
East Sussex	225	910
Essex	208	895
Gloucestershire	159	764
Hampshire	219	807
Hereford and Worcester	165	611
Hertfordshire	185	740
Humberside	233	905
Isle of Wight	154	485
Kent	215	704
Lancashire	210	757
Leicestershire	238	732
Lincolnshire	162	553
Norfolk	154	742
North Yorkshire	144	713
Northamptonshire	182	682
Northumberland	147	470
Nottinghamshire	212	723
Oxfordshire	164	756
Shropshire	160	684
Somerset	149	701
Staffordshire	221	793
Suffolk	167	608
Surrey	201	733
Warwickshire	185	667
West Sussex	208	918
Wiltshire	152	753
England	216	753

Pupils (Religious Allegiance)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the results for each local education authority of the religious allegiance statistics for pupils in maintained schools collected under his Department's circular 16/89, including the religious allegiance figures for pupils aged five to 11 years at the beginning of the school year 1990-91 and the percentage of such pupils in each local education authority of each religious affiliation according to the said circular and those for whom no information is available; and if he will give the corresponding information for England as a whole.

Mr. Forth: The information supplied by many local education authorities and self-governing state schools in 1990-91 was incomplete and of poor quality. I do not intend to publish the results, but I will write separately to my hon. Friend on this matter.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will list for each local education authority the number of determinations granted to schools by the standing advisory council on religious education under section 12 of the Education Reform Act 1988, the total number of county and controlled schools, and the percentage of such schools which have been granted exemption from daily Christian worship; and if he will give summary figures for England as a whole;

(2) what percentage of schools have been granted exemption from daily Christian worship; and if he will list them.

Mr. Forth: The information is not available in the form requested. The following table lists for each local authority where a determination has been granted, and for England as a whole, the number of determinations granted, the number of county schools, and the number of determinations as a percentage of county schools.

It is not possible to give the percentage of county schools with determinations since more than one determination may apply to a single school. Controlled schools cannot be granted determinations because they are not subject to the requirement that worship should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. Controlled schools are not therefore included in the information. Information on which schools have been granted determinations is not held centrally.

London Education Authority	Determinations granted	County schools	Determinations as percentage of county schools
Bedfordshire	6	230	2·6
Berkshire	13	219	5·9
Birmingham	6	311	1·9
Bolton	1	68	1·5
Bradford	69	192	35·9
Brent	59	56	105·0
Buckinghamshire	2	240	0·8
Cambridgeshire	1	223	0·4
Coventry	4	95	4·2
Ealing	23	91	25·3
Gloucestershire	2	176	1·1
Harrow	5	53	9·4
Hertfordshire	2	384	0·5
Hounslow	12	63	19·0
Kirklees	8	136	5·9
Lancashire	6	311	1·9
Merton	4	46	8·7
Newham	5	66	7·6
Rochdale	8	53	15·0
Rotherham	5	112	4·5
Salford	1	59	1·8
Surrey	2	289	0·7
Tameside	1	67	1·5
Trafford	3	68	4·4
Waltham Forest	1	67	1·5
Westminster	1	18	5·5
Wirral	1	94	1·1
Wolverhampton	2	88	2·3
ENGLAND	253	15,313	1·7

Primary Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) when the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education was invited to consider the discussion paper "Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools" published by his Department; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education submitted its report to him on its consideration of the discussion paper "Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools"; and whether he will publish the report;

(3) what recommendations were made to him by the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education arising from its consideration of the discussion paper "Curriculum Organisation and Classroom Practice in Primary Schools".

Mr. Forth: The then Secretary of State wrote to the chairman of the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education in February 1992 to seek the council's advice on the implications for the initial training of primary teachers of the report on curriculum organisation and classroom practice in primary schools. CATE submitted interim advice to my right hon. Friend in July 1992, emphasising the need for further work. Following the two recent reports on primary education from the National Curriculum Council and from Ofsted, my right hon. Friend has now requested further advice from CATE with a view to issuing in April, for consultation, proposals for the reform of training for primary teachers.

Syllabuses

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which local education authorities have adopted new agreed syllabuses since 29 September 1988; whether in each case the syllabus is newly prepared or an adopted syllabus of another local education authority; and if in the latter case he will list the name of that syllabus and the date of preparation.

Mr. Forth: We understand that the local education authorities listed in the table have adopted new agreed syllabuses since 29 September 1988. Where an authority has adopted the agreed syllabus of another local education authority, the name of the authority and the date of the syllabus is included in brackets.

Bolton
Cleveland
Cornwall
Coventry
Croydon
Cumbria (Suffolk, 1991)
Devon
Dorset
Ealing
East Sussex
Gateshead
Gloucester
Hampshire
Harrow (Hampshire, 1978)
Havering
Hereford and Worcester (Hampshire, 1978)
Hounslow
Kent
Kingston-upon-Thames (Surrey, 1987)
Leeds
Leicester
Newcastle
Newham
North Tyneside
North Yorkshire
Nottingham
Oldham
Oxford
Richmond (Hampshire, 1992)
Rotherham
St. Helens (Leeds, 1991)
Sandwell
Sefton

Shropshire
Solihull
South Tyneside
Stafford
Suffolk
Sunderland (Salford, 1987)
Trafford
Wakefield

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give the names of agreed syllabuses about which his Department has received complaints under section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988 since its passing; and what actions his Department has taken following these complaints and the subsequent action of the local education authority concerned.

Mr. Forth: The Department has received complaints about the agreed syllabuses of Coventry, Ealing and Newham local education authorities. The first of these complaints is still under consideration. Following the other complaints, the Department wrote to the authorities setting out the Secretary of State's concern that their syllabuses were not detailed enough to meet the statutory requirements. The Department also wrote to chief education officers in England on 18 March 1991 with advice about the nature of agreed syllabuses. Newham LEA has subsequently adopted a statutory appendix to its syllabus. Ealing LEA has constituted an agreed syllabus conference to review its syllabus.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the Education Act 1981 to prohibit the exclusion from school of children with special educational needs while *(a)* the process of assessment or *(b)* an appeal by parents against their child's statement is ongoing.

Mr. Forth: No. While we look to schools to use exclusion sparingly and as a last resort, particularly where pupils with special educational needs are concerned, there will be instances where it is the most appropriate response to serious misbehaviour.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Ben Hamilton

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *316*, whether, prior to the discontinuance of the proceedings against Mr. Hamilton, forensic reports had been received on all materials sent for examination in connection with the proceedings.

The Attorney-General: At the time the decision to discontinue the criminal proceedings against Mr. Hamilton was made, there were certain outstanding lines of inquiry being pursued by the police which included the results of forensic examinations. However, these lines of inquiry could not be assessed as likely to produce the required corroboration for the perjury charge and were unlikely to have been completed within a time scale which would have justified an application for a further remand.

DEFENCE

Trident

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the staff requirement for the warhead for the United Kingdom Trident system was formally endorsed by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: August 1984.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the additional capabilities which would be available to the United Kingdom Trident system if the mark IV bus purchased from the United States of America was replaced with mark V bus from the same source.

Mr. Aitken: No such assessment has been made.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Trident missile service units are used in conjunction with the explosives handling jetty at Coulport.

Mr. Aitken: They will be.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration has been given to the purchase of the mark V bus for the United Kingdom Trident system from the United States of America.

Mr. Aitken: None.

Defence Electronics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why the press were prohibited from attending the conference on exporting defence electronics held by his Department's Defence Sales Export Organisation on 24 February.

Mr. Aitken: The conference was a private one providing members of the Electronics Equipment Association and Defence Export Services Organisation with the opportunity to exchange views in confidence on a wide range of issues. Requests from the media to attend the conference were therefore declined.

Navy Statistics

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of *(a)* surface ships currently used by the Royal Navy and *(b)* serving officers of Admiral rank.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Navy currently has 98 surface ships of minesweeper size and above, excluding RFA vessels, and 42 serving officers at admiral rank, including those at rear and vice admiral, excluding those who are currently on terminal leave or undergoing pre-retirement vocational training.

Helicopters

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much of the defence budget will be spent on armed helicopters in *(a)* 1993-94 and *(b)* each of the next five years.

Mr. Aitken: This information is derived from my Department's long-term costing. As explained by my right

hon. Friend in his answer of 13 May last year, *Official Report*, column *155*, it is not our practice to provide such details.

Submarines

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many submarines are deployed by the Royal Navy at present: and if he will list the different types.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Royal Navy's submarine fleet currently consists of three Polaris, one Valiant, five Swiftsure, seven Trafalgar, three Oberon and three Upholder class submarines.

Personnel Statistics

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of *(a)* officers and *(b)* other service personnel in (i) the British Army, (ii) the Royal Navy and (iii) the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The figures at 1 February 1993 are:

	Officers	*Other ranks*	*Total*
Royal Navy	9,907	50,196	60,103
Army	16,354	120,608	136,962
Royal Air Force	14,524	67,264	81,788
TOTAL	40,785	238,068	278,853

Deployments

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the average interval in months a United Kingdom soldier in the British Army can expect between *(a)* deployments and *(b)* deployments in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information is not held in the form requested.

Sailing Clubs

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what orders have been given for yachts for sailing clubs in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force; if he will list in each case the type of yacht, its cost, where the order has been placed and when the yacht will be in service; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many sailing clubs operate in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Royal Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force; what were the annual running costs for each over the last three years and the estimates for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: All sailing clubs in the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force are private clubs run for the benefit of their members. In the Army there are 62 such clubs in the United Kingdom and abroad ranging from windsurfing through dinghy to offshore sailing. A similar situation applies in the Royal Navy and the RAF, but information on the numbers of clubs is not readily available. Clubs purchase their yachts using their own non-public funds. It would not be appropriate for me to provide information on these private transactions or on the running costs and estimates of these clubs.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Aitken: With the exception of the Meteorological Office, which provides a 24-hour service seven days a week, and the service careers/recruiting offices which have set opening hours and are manned to provide advice and assistance to the public during these hours, the Ministry of Defence provides little else in the way of a direct service to the general public.

Conditioned hours are 41 gross per week in the London pay area, and 42 gross per week elsewhere. Arrival and departure times of staff may be staggered in accordance with departmental regulations. The overriding principle, however, remains that flexibility should be achieved without adverse effect on the overall efficiency of the Department in general, and the establishment in particular.

Naval Colleges (Vehicles)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy as regards buying trucks and cars of British manufacture for the use of naval colleges; what new vehicles have been bought by each naval college in the last three years; and if he will give the cost and country of origin in each case.

Mr. Aitken: Trucks and cars for the naval colleges are purchased as part of the defence wide procurement of vehicles by my Department's procurement executive. In accordance with Government policy best value for money is sought through competition, which under European Community rules must be open to companies of all EC member nations.

The new vehicles issued to each of the naval colleges in the last three years are listed in the table:

Britannia Royal Naval College—Dartmouth
3 Rover Montego 2·0 DLX
2 Rover Metro City 1·0 L
1 Ford Escort Estate 1·8 D Popular
1 Renault Traffic 1100 D Crewbus
2 Leyland DAF 200 Minibus
1 Land Rover Defender 90
1 Land Rover Defender 110
1 Plaxton 29 Seat Coach
1 Leyland DAF 200 Dropside Truck
2 Leyland DAF 4 Tonne Truck

Royal Naval College—Greenwich
1 Rover 825 D
4 Rover Montego 2·0 DLX

Royal Naval Engineering College—Manadon
1 Rover Montego 2·0 DLX
1 Leyland DAF 200 Dropside Truck

All the above vehicles originated in the United Kingdom, with the exception of the Renault Traffic, which originated in France.

The cost of the vehicles is commercially confidential.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what assessment he has made of the defence implications of the Chilean Government's stockpile of chemical weapons;

(2) what assessment he has made of the defence implications of Egyptian research focusing on pathogenic micro-organisms and dangerous disease-bearing agents;

(3) what assessment he has made of the defence implications of the Iranian sarin and mustard gas producing capability;

(4) what assessment he has made of the defence implications of the development of biological weapons including anthrax, cholera, bubonic plague and smallpox by North Korea.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Increased proliferation of chemical and biological weapons has both international and regional security implications. We continue to keep the situation under review and the United Kingdom is determined to play a full part, through existing international fora, in controlling the proliferation of such weapons.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the the level of Libyan stocks of sarin, mustard gas and phosgene.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We are aware that Libya has had the capability to produce mustard and nerve agents since the late 1908s.

RAF Hereford

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the reasons for the closure of RAF Hereford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) on 6 November 1992, *Official Report*, cols. *536-37*.

Warrior Vehicles

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Warrior vehicles are deployed with *(a)* the British forces in Bosnia Herzegovina and *(b)* the British Army of the Rhine.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The numbers are *(a)* 68 and *(b)* 283.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Warrior vehicles deployed with the British Army of the Rhine are in full working order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: It is not our practice to disclose information of an operational nature.

United Nations Military Planning

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *497*, what plans have been made to provide British military personnel to strengthen the military component of the United Nations secretariat; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many military personnel are currently attached to the United Nations secretariat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are currently 47 military personnel from all nations attached to the United Nations secretariat. The United Kingdom provides one major and one lieutenant commander on secondment to the field operations division of the United Nations secretariat. These officers deal with finance and logistics respectively. We would consider favourably any request by the United Nations to provide further military personnel for service in the secretariat.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *497*, what is the current status of the discussions relating to strengthening the military component of the United Nations secretariat; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The military adviser's office of the United Nations secretariat has already been reinforced to deal with specific subjects such as earmarking and training. More general strengthening and restructuring of the secretariat's military component is under consideration as part of the follow-up to the Secretary-General's report, "An Agenda for Peace", and the United Kingdom mission to the United Nations is playing an active role in these discussions.

Long-term Costings

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he is now prepared to change his policy regarding the release of information on the long-term costings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No. I have nothing to add to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) on 13 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *155*.

Departmental Accommodation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on the sale of MOD accommodation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Surplus married quarters which are suitable for individual sale are offered for sale to service personnel at a discount. Any which are not suitable for individual sale would normally be offered for sale in bulk on the open market to the highest bidder. In line with the recommendations of the Ministry of Defence's housing task force, all bulk sales of surplus married quarters are now offered in the first instance to housing associations at a discount in return for nomination rights on a proportion of the properties for a period of five years; the size of the discount and the number of nominations are determined on a case-by-case basis. Surplus civilian houses are sold on the open market, but any which are occupied are first offered for sale to the sitting tenant at a discount. If they do not wish to purchase, the property is sold on the open market as an investment sale and the occupant is given a protected tenancy.

RAF Hereford

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when the new Meridian telephone system at RAF Hereford will be installed;

(2) how much it will cost to install the new Meridian telephone system at RAF Hereford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Installation costs, including minor works services, will amount to some £5,000. Work is under way with a view to the system becoming operational on 1 April.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with *(a)* housing associations and *(b)* local authorities relating to the housing located at RAF Hereford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information has been provided to relevant local authorities on the reasons for the closure of RAF Hereford.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Letters were sent to the Hereford and Worcester county council and to the South Hereford district council on 5 November 1992 explaining the background to the ground training rationalisation study and its recommendations. The local defence land agent has since met both councils to confirm that the closure will proceed and to discuss the future of the site.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimates have been made of the costs involved in removing the Meridian telephone system that is due to be installed at RAF Hereford; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None. It is not expected that removal costs would exceed installation costs.

Spare Parts

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *497*, which part of the annual supply estimates contains information on expenditure on spare parts.

Mr. Aitken: Proposed expenditure by the Ministry of Defence on spare parts is included within the aggregate figures of expenditure given in the supply estimates, the most recent being 1992-93 summer supplementary estimates and new estimates, pages 25-32.

Correspondence

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow can expect to receive a reply to his letter dated 10 February addressed to the Minister of State concerning the holding of a fatal accident inquiry into the death of Fusilier Anthony McAnally.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member very shortly.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Know-how Projects

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give the total amount spent by the Government to date on know-how projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Expenditure under the fund is as follows:

	£000
1989-90	2,117
1990-91	13,668
1991-92	49,364

Total spending for 1992-93 will not be available until later this year.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many civil servants in each standard planning region have been seconded to work on know-how projects.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Nine civil servants from south-east region, four from north-west region and one from east midlands region have been seconded to work on know-how projects.

Ms. Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many know-how projects have been supported to date; if he will list these with the names of the agencies or companies responsible for undertaking them; and in each case what proportion of the total cost was met by Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The know-how fund has supported more than 650 projects to date. A list of our activities by country, cost, purpose and project status is available from the libraries of the House. To break this down further to include details on each agency or company participating in the projects and what proportion of the total cost was met by the Government would involve disproportionate staff costs.

Crown Agents

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he will publish the Coopers and Lybrand report on the Crown Agents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There are no plans to publish Coopers and Lybrand management consultants' report, as it will contain commercially sensitive information on Crown Agents' business activities. However, a full statement will be made to the House about the future status of the Crown Agents following the completion of the review.

Chandrapur Project

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if appraisal procedures on social, environmental and economic costs and benefits of the Chandrapur project in India have now been completed; and whether the United Kingdom Government's developmental as well as commercial criteria have now been met.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration has not yet completed its appraisal of the Chandrapur project in India.

Africa

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will state the reasons for the United Kingdom's refusal to provide

funding for the International Fund for Agricultural Development's special programme for Africa for poverty alleviation through environmental rehabilitation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We consider that IFAD's work in Africa, as for other poor regions, should now be financed from its regular resources.

Mongolia

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what development assistance is given to Mongolia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1992 we established a bilateral aid programme for Mongolia and pledged £2.7 million over three years from 1992-93. Of this sum £2 million is allocated for balance of payments assistance in the form of critical imports—industrial lubricants, and £0.7 million for technical co-operation—principally English language teaching and policy consultancy to support the World bank lending programme.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance his Department gives to Mongolia for English language tuition.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Under the bilateral aid programme an English language project is under discussion with the Government of Mongolia which is planned to focus on (i) intensive business English courses for officials in key economic Ministries and financial institutions and (ii) teacher training in business English. The project is expected to begin in mid-1993.

Under the cultural exchange programme we are funding, with the British Council, the final stage of an English syllabus and teaching materials project for secondary schools. This project, which began in 1990, will produce a first-year textbook, and includes training for Mongolian textbook writers.

Kenya

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about British aid to Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We continue to make a significant contribution to Kenya's development. Our aid programme amounted to £29 million in 1991-92. We also provided over £9 million humanitarian assistance in 1992, including our share of EC activities. However, in common with other donors, we have withheld consideration of new balance of payments assistance pending economic and political reforms. There has been progress on the political front. We now await the outcome of a recent review of economic progress by the International Monetary Fund.

Zaire

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the level of British aid to Zaire for each year since 1989; and if he will list the purposes for which aid was used.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Gross British bilateral aid, for each financial year from 1989, was as follows:

	£
1989-90	513,000
1990-91	432,000
1991-92	397,000

The aid has been mainly for training Zairean teachers of English and help for Oxfam activities.

Forest Preservation

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about British contributions to the tropical forestry action plan for each year since 1989; and what assessment he has made of its effectiveness in protecting tropical and other forestry resources.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Bilateral aid expenditure under agreed tropical forestry action plans by financial year since 1989 was:

	£
1989-90	1,688,454
1990-91	2,586,218
1991-92	4,767,103

We also contributed £121,493 in 1990-91, and £92,473 in 1991-92, towards the costs of personnel working in the tropical forest action programme co-ordinating unit and in the Food and Agriculture Organisation investment centre on TFAP-related work.

We assess the effectiveness of our contributions to the TFAP through regular monitoring and review of our projects. We believe they are effective in helping recipient countries manage their forests sustainably.

We also assess the progress of the TFAP generally through attendance at international meetings such as the tropical forestry advisers' group. We have worked hard in recent years to improve the TFAP's overall performance.

Uganda

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about British aid to Uganda.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are maintaining a substantial programme of development assistance for Uganda. In 1991-92 gross British bilateral aid amounted to £26 million.

Angola

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commowealth Affairs what was the level of British aid to Angola for each year since 1989; and if Her Majesty's Government will provide assistance to the Angolan Government in the current year to entrench democracy in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The level of United Kingdom gross bilateral aid to Angola for each financial year since 1989 was as follows:

	£ million
1989-90	0.731
1990-91	1.530
1991-92	1.278

In 1992-93, in addition to our regular programme, we provided landrovers and paid for two election observers at a cost of £273,000, as part of the international effort towards the election process. We also provided accommodation and training for the new unified army at a cost of £3 million from non-ODA votes.

The widespread hostilities which followed the elections has made it difficult to make plans for future aid to the country. We will however consider appropriate assistance when the security situation improves.

EMPLOYMENT

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from her Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has always used contracting out as the most effective way of providing certain services, for example, where there is no suitable in-house provision available. In such cases, there is normally no scope for an in-house bid. Details of such contracts are not kept centrally and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

To date, the Department has not completed a market test without an in-house bid, nor are any anticipated.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* male full-time workers, *(b)* male part-time workers, *(c)* female full-time workers, *(d)* female part-time workers, *(e)* self-employed males and *(f)* self-employed females had a second job as (i) an employee or (ii) self-employed in each year since 1980 in each region.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information could be provided from the labour force survey only at a disproportionate cost. Some data may be obtained via the quantime link in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* male full-time workers, *(b)* male part-time workers, *(c)* female full-time workers, *(d)* female part-time workers, *(e)* self-employed males and *(f)* self-employed females had a second job as (i) an employee or (ii) self-employed in each year since 1980.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information from the labour force survey is given in the following table for 1984-1992. Comparable information is not available for earlier years.

All persons with second job as employee or self-employed, by sex, whether full/part-time, etc.: Great Britain

Thousands

	1984	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
All with 2nd job as employee[1]									
Males									
Full-time[2]	184	206	202	195	223	227	248	244	208
Part-time	27	26	26	24	37	32	31	41	36
Females									
Full-time	82	107	103	120	138	150	176	156	154
Part-time	151	178	193	223	253	283	254	278	264
Self-employed[1] in main job									
Males	24	26	27	24	36	38	37	48	42
Females	17	24	24	27	31	31	26	25	27
All with 2nd job as self-employed									
Males									
Full-time[2]	137	146	159	148	168	182	196	184	163
Part-time	24	18	19	22	21	23	24	24	24
Females									
Full-time	27	35	35	39	46	56	53	57	39
Part-time	59	61	72	61	70	84	74	69	61
Self-employed in main job									
Males	54	53	59	60	72	70	75	73	60
Females	20	24	18	18	24	32	28	25	17

[1] Excludes those who did not state their status or no answer to second job.
[2] Excludes those who did not state whether full/part-time in second job.
Source: Labour Force Survey (not seasonally adjusted) spring each year.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women had a second job working from home in each year since 1980.

Mr. McLoughlin: Information from the spring, March to May, 1992 labour force survey shows that there were 139,000 men and 121,000 women, not seasonally adjusted, who were working from home in a second job. No comparable information is available for earlier years.

Employment Protection Regulations

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will place in the Library copies of all circulars and other advice issued by her Department concerning the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has advised the Standing Committee considering the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, House of Commons, *Official Report*, Standing Committee F, 21 January 1993, beginning at column 504,

on aspects of the Transfer of Undertakings Regulations 1981 and the EC acquired rights directive. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is considering what further guidance might be helpful.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Claimants, Lewisham

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants in the London borough of Lewisham were refused benefits because they either carried out more than 24 hours voluntary work each week or studied for more than 21 hours per week in each year since 1987.

Mr. Burt: There is no legislation limiting the amount of hours an unemployed person may spend working in the voluntary sector. An unemployed person who undertakes unpaid voluntary work in this country may continue to receive benefit provided they satisfy the conditions of entitlement. These are that a person must be available for, and actively seeking, work.

An unemployed person who studies part-time for up to 21 hours a week may be treated as available for work in order to receive income support. An unemployed person who undertakes part-time study for more than 21 hours a week may also continue to receive benefit if they can demonstrate that they are available for work and so satisfy the availability condition. All unemployed people who study part time must continue to actively seek work.

Lodgers

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the speed with which housing benefit is paid to lodgers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Full statutory responsibility for the administration of the housing benefit scheme rests with local authorities. Regulations prescribe that all claims should be processed within 14 days of receipt of the necessary information, or as soon as possible thereafter. Many authorities achieve this target in full. Nationally, in 1991-92, 70 per cent. of claims from private tenants were processed within 14 days. Where, through no fault of the applicant, a claim cannot be settled within 14 days, interim payments should be made. Guidance issued to local authorities by the Department reflects these provisions.

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give his best estimate of the amount of housing benefit paid to lodgers which is not then paid to their landlords;

(2) what review he is undertaking of the arrangement whereby a lodger who has given authority for his housing benefit to be paid to his landlord may revoke that authority without the landlord being informed.

Mr. Burt: The Department does not collect information about the levels of debts owed to landlords. Representations received from landlords and their organisations indicate that the number of housing benefit recipients who persistently default on rent payments is relatively small.

Regulations already give local authorities wide-ranging powers to pay housing benefit direct to landlords where they consider that tenants may otherwise default. Benefit must normally be paid direct automatically without any requirement to seek the tenant's consent where there are arrears equal to eight times the weekly rent or more and may be paid direct earlier where an authority considers it would be in the tenant's best interests to do so.

Where a person who has requested direct payment subsequently withdraws his consent, the local authority should consider the individual circumstances of the case. The authority may continue to make direct payments if it considers it is in the tenant's interests, for example to prevent rent arrears accruing. If it is decided to stop direct payments the local authority is required to notify the landlord of the date from which payments will cease. We have no current plans to conduct a review of these arrangements.

Winter

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will introduce additional aid in winter for all households in receipt of means-tested benefits.

Mr. Scott: There are no plans to change the current regulations.

Availability for Work

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's practice on the number of hours per day and the number of days in any one week that a person needs to be available for work in order to claim benefit.

Mr. Burt: Decisions on whether a person is available for work are made by the independent adjudicating authorities.

Generally, in order to be entitled to income support, which is a weekly benefit, a person should be available for at least 24 hours per week.

Unemployment benefit is a daily benefit and, therefore, a person should be available for work on each day claimed.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Burt: No. Fridays are treated no differently from any other working day. Full-time administrative staff in the Department work 37 hours a week outside London, 36 hours a week in London, in keeping with civil service-wide rules. Working patterns can vary, but consideration is always given to customers' views on the level of service provided.

Unregistered Care Homes

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *46*, in what circumstances he would deem it appropriate for registration authorities to be advised of the fact that income support and residential allowance were being paid towards the costs of care in an unregistered home.

Mr. Burt: There are no circumstances in which registration officers would require such information.

Youth Training

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proposals he has to review the mandatory link between income support benefit eligibility and willingness to take a youth training place; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: Subject to the normal rules, income support is payable to those who are not required to be available for work. We also provide the safety net of income support for those seeking work or training who are at risk of hardship. We have no plans to change this policy although we continue to monitor closely the delivery of benefit.

Social Fund

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the administrative costs of the social fund in cash terms for 1992-93 and as a proportion of the social fund budget.

Mr. Scott: The information requested is not yet available. The latest estimated administrative costs of the social fund as a percentage of social fund expenditure are for 1991-92. Details are provided in the Social Security departmental report: the Government's expenditure plans 1993-94 to 1995-96, a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's target response time for the Benefits Agency to respond to requests for medical evidence to unsuccessful applicants for disability living allowance; what data he has on actual average response times; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Part-time Study

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants are currently studying on part-time courses under the 21-hour rule.

Mr. Burt: This information is not available. The 21-hour rule enables unemployed claimants in receipt of income support to follow part-time education courses while continuing their search for work. The Department's annual statistical enquiry contains no record of the numbers who take advantage of this rule.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average weekly payment of invalidity benefit at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: On 30 March 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, the average weekly payment of invalidity benefit was £67.40.

Note: Information from a 1 per cent. sample of claimants.

Housing Benefit (Students)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will consider reintroducing eligibility to housing benefit for students who have to pay for accommodation over the long summer vacation, particularly for mature students who may own their own homes.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so. In general it is the educational maintenance system which is designed to provide support for full-time students; mature students are likely to be entitled to additional allowances such as the older students allowance and dependency allowances. Housing benefit, which helps with rent, is available to vulnerable group students throughout their course, including the summer vacations. Income support which can provide help with mortgage interest payments, is available to lone parents and disabled students throughout their course and to student couples with dependent children during the summer vaction. In addition non-student partners can claim income support and housing benefit on behalf of the couple if they satisfy the normal qualifying conditions.

Portuguese Scheme

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average time taken to deal with an application for sickness benefit by residents in the United Kingdom who have paid contributions into the Portuguese scheme; what difficulties have been encountered in receiving information from the Portuguese authorities on request for confirmation of payments into these schemes; and how long the Portuguese authorities take to reply to such requests.

Mr. Scott: The administration of sickness benefit, including liaison with a country overseas in which a person has paid contributions, is a matter for Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Mike O'Brien, dated 5 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what is the average time taken to deal with an application for sickness benefit by residents in the United Kingdom who have paid contributions into the Portuguese scheme; what difficulties have been encountered in receiving information from the Portuguese authorities on request for confirmation of payments into these schemes; and how long the Portuguese authorities take to reply to such requests.

I should first of all explain that the European Community regulations on social security enable contributions paid in two or more Member States to be added together to assist in the satisfaction of the contribution conditions for Sickness Benefit. Generally, however, only one country actually pays the benefit and this is the country in which the person was lastly insured.

Where a person is residing in the UK, any claim to Sickness Benefit will normally be made to the District Office of the Benefits Agency in the area in which that person is living. If the contribution conditions are not satisfied on the UK National Insurance record alone, but the claimant has recently returned from abroad, the Agency's Overseas Branch will become involved.

The customer will be asked to provide details of employment and contributions abroad, and Overseas Branch will liaise, as necessary, with the foreign authority concerned. The actual procedures vary according to whether the person, before falling sick, had contributed to the UK scheme since their return to this country or whether they had been lastly insured abroad.

Where the person was most recently insured in the UK, Overseas Branch will ask the foreign authority to provide a record of contributions to their scheme to see whether they can assist towards satisfaction of the UK contribution conditions for Sickness Benefit. In such cases it is impossible to say precisely how long it will take for any individual foreign authority to respond. This varies considerably from country to country and even from office to office within a particular country. It should be borne in mind that legal requirements and administrative practices often differ from our own. For example, records may not be held centrally, particularly if a person has been subject to legislation which provides for affiliation to an occupational scheme. In such instances retrieval of remote contribution records can take longer than centrally held information.

Conversely, where a person was most recently insured in another European Community country, Overseas Branch does not need to obtain the foreign contribution record. They are responsible for obtaining all relevant information about the period abroad from the customer, all claim documents from the District Office and information about contributions paid to the UK scheme. The claim is then transferred to the other Member State concerned. It is for them to decide entitlement to Sickness Benefit under their scheme, taking into account any UK contributions as necessary. The foreign authority will notify the customer of their decision, and consider redress if the person is dissatisfied.

With regard to the Portuguese authorities, we have not experienced any particular problems in our dealings with them. In keeping with many other foreign authorities response times for requests for their contribution records vary considerably from case to case. Because of such variations, it would be unrealistic, and indeed unfair, to attempt to give an average figure. Similarly, I am unable to comment on the time it takes for them to process a claim for which they are responsible for determining.

I am sorry that I am unable to be more precise in my reply. However, every effort is made to clear cases involving foreign authorities as quickly as possible, and procedures are kept under constant review and improvements introduced wherever possible.

Local Office, Northfield

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *694*, what is the policy of the Northfield benefits agency office on paying benefit temporarily by girocheques on a weekly basis pending the replacement of a lost benefit book; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Dr Lynne Jones, dated 5 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his Answer 10 February, Official Report, column 694, asking what is the policy of the Northfield Benefits Agency office on paying benefit temporarily by girocheque on a weekly basis pending the replacement of a lost benefit book; and if he will make a statement.

As stated in my letter of 9 February, when a customer reports that an order book has been lost, he is asked about the circumstances surrounding the loss. The interview to obtain this information is carried out by trained officers, experienced in dealing with this type of situation. The officer must be satisfied that reasonable efforts have been taken to recover the order book.

The decision to replace or refuse replacement is made by an officer acting on behalf of the Secretary of State. If that officer has reason to doubt the validity of the reported loss, a replacement may not be made pending further investigation.

In the case of Northfield Benefits Agency office, there have been 474 reported lost Income Support order books in the period 2 March 1992 to 24 February 1993, of which 393 have been replaced. Of these 393, a proportion will have received payment by weekly girocheque pending the outcome of investigations.

I hope you find this reply helpful. Copies of this letter will be placed in the library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC Surplus Food

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the amount of EC surplus foods distributed in the Greater London area in each of the last five years.

Mr Curry: The following amounts of butter and beef have been distributed in the Greater London area under the EC surplus food scheme.

Year	*Butter (tonnes)*	*Beef (tonnes)*
1988-89	93	96
1989-90	131	154·5
1990-91	235	162
1991-92	483	118
1992-93	228	130

Hillsdown Holdings

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what services have been provided to Ministers or their officials by Hillsdown Holdings or any of its related companies in the last five years.

Mr. Curry: The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is the sponsoring Department for the food and drink industry. It is therefore necessary for Ministers and officials to have contacts with a very wide range of companies in that sector, including Hillsdown Holdings.

Poultry Inspections

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations he has received as to the independence from poultry-producing companies of on-line inspectors of poultry meat; (2) what proposals he has for the meat inspection service as it relates to poultry products; (3) which poultry producers are represented on the working committee charged with responsibility for developing new arrangements for the inspection of poultry meat; (4) what further consideration is being given by his Department to on-line inspection by employees of poultry producers under a spotter system; (5) on what occasions in the last year he has discussed with the chairman of Hillsdown Holdings

the question of poultry meat inspection manning levels; and where the meetings took place; (6) what discussions he has had with representatives of the poultry trade as to a modified regime for the inspection of poultry on poultry plants; (7) what representations he has received from poultry producers in favour of changes in the arrangements for the inspection of poultry; and if he will list the companies involved; (8) what proposals he has as to responsibility for training on-line inspectors of poultry products.

Mr Soames: The Government are currently preparing to implement EC Council directive 92/116/EEC amending and updating directive 71/118/EEC on poultry meat hygiene. This directive was agreed in December 1992 and is due for implementation in member states by 1 January 1994.

The new directive takes into account developments in this area over the last 20 years, including a series of studies carried out on behalf of the European Commission in the 1980s, into alternative methods of poultry meat inspection. These studies demonstrated that information on the health status of the flock from which birds were taken can aid inspection at the slaughterhouse and that company employees could carry out inspection with the same effectiveness as official inspectors, given adequate training. Under the new directive, member states are authorised to permit individual companies to utilise their own staff to carry out on-line inspection at the slaughterhouse, under supervision and control by the official veterinary surgeon with responsibility for the slaughterhouse.

The new directive also makes extensive provisions for poultry meat inspectors to assist the official veterinary surgeon in the day-to-day supervision of poultry processing, and it is likely that these staff will increasingly take on a supervisory role.

The Government support the principle that companies may be eligible to carry out poultry meat inspection under the supervision of enforcement bodies. This is consistent with the principle embodied in the Food Safety Act 1990 that the food industry has the main responsibility for ensuring the protection of its customers. The directive lays down detailed requirements for the monitoring and supervision of the inspection function, and requires that detailed guidance on training shall be laid down by the Commission.

The Government have invited representative organisations, including the British Poultry Meat Federation, British Retail Consortium, and meat inspector, training, veterinary and local authority interests to join a working group set up to discuss the detailed requirements, including training, which will apply under the new system. The poultry industry representation on this group has yet to be agreed.

Since the Department first consulted interested parties on the Commission's proposals in 1990. it has received eight representations on the independence from poultry producing companies of the poultry inspection system, from a range of individuals and organisations. Representations from poultry companies on the Commission's proposals were received through trade associations including the British Poultry Meat Federation. In addition the Scottish Office and Northern Ireland Office have received separate representations from individual companies. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food discussed the EC poultry meat market, with industry representatives, including, Hillsdown Holdings, Northern Foods, Bernard Matthews, Cherry Valley and Favour Parker Ltd. on a number of occasions in 1992. He has also visited Sun Valley and Lloyd Maunder for discussions.

The Department will issue for public consultation in due course its detailed proposals on guidance and legislation to implement the new Directive. Guidance was issued to local authorities on 3 November on the use of trained plant staff to assist in poultry meat inspection, as a measure to ease the transition to the new arrangements.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Curry: It is the responsibility of local managers to set hours of work for their staff which take account, among other things, of the needs of the public they serve.

Livestock Identification Scheme

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will include the livestock identification scheme in the Government's deregulation initiative.

Mr. Soames: All the Department's activities are conditioned by the need to minimise the regulatory burden on those affected. In the case of animal identification this is of course subject to the need for measures to protect public and animal health and to safeguard taxpayers' money.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received on the livestock identification scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Representatives of the livestock industry and enforcement bodies are being fully consulted on the implementation of new Community rules on animal identification and registration. Helpful and constructive contributions have been received from the farming unions, breeding organisations, auctioneers, local authorities and others.

Grants and Subsidies

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what sums were paid out by each of his divisional offices for each *(a)* agricultural subsidy scheme and *(b)* grant scheme available to farmers in 1992; how many agreements were entered into for each grant scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Curry: A restructured regional organisation for the Ministry came into effect on 1 April 1992, when the existing five regional offices and 19 divisional offices were replaced by nine regional service centres. Information in the form required for 1992 cannot therefore be provided.

However, the number of plans approved under the farm and conservation grant scheme in England is shown in the table.

Some data on agreements under other schemes and sums paid out in England should become available shortly. I will pass on this information shortly. Aggregate summaries of grants and subsidy expenditure are included in the Ministry's February 1993 departmental report (Cm 2203), a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Farm and conservation grant scheme: Plans approved in 1992

	Number
1 January 1992 to 31 March 1992	
Regional Office	
Eastern	14
Midlands and West	21
Northern	15
South East	14
South West	20
1 April 1992 to 31 December 1992	
Regional Service Centre	
Bristol	5
Cambridge	29
Carlisle	73
Crewe	26
Exeter (with outstation at Truro)	33
Northallerton	25
Nottingham	35
Reading	28
Worcester	13

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the budget for 1993-94 and the estimate for 1994-95, the number of acres covered and the number of farms that could be included in *(a)* the Somerset Levels environmentally sensitive area and *(b)* the Broads environmentally sensitive area.

Mr. Curry: The budget for the ESA scheme is £30·2 million in 1993-94 rising to £42·6 million in 1994-95. The scheme is managed as a whole and we do not allocate individual budgets to ESAs. The total area of the Somerset levels and moors ESA is 27,717 hectares, 68,488 acres, and the total area of the Broads ESA is 35,820 hectares, 88,510 acres. It is not possible to determine accurately the number of farmers in each area because the ESA boundaries do not coincide with parish boundaries in respect of which such data might be obtained from the agricultural census.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those environmentally sensitive areas where payments are being made to manage water levels; and if he will list the total payments made under such schemes to date.

Mr. Curry: A requirement to manage water levels is included in all ESAs where field wetness is critical to the ecological interest of river valley grassland. In the Somerset levels and moors, Broads, North Kent marshes, Suffolk river valley and Avon valley ESAs there is a specific payment to encourage farmers to raise water levels in order to enhance the habitat for birds. This is the first year in which such conditions are being met in the Somerset levels and moors and Broads ESAs. It involves maintaining the water table at field level to create surface pools between 1 January and 30 April. Full payment will not be made until we are satisfied that the conditions can be maintained on the affected land.

Agriculture Support

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the amount spent in each of the last 10 years in direct support to British agriculture in cash and real terms; what is his estimate of future costs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: The table provides figures on public expenditure under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies for the last 10 years, expressed as actual expenditure and in real terms. Figures for future years on a broadly comparable basis are provided in tables 8 and 23 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food/ Intervention Board departmental report 1993, which has been lodged in the House of Commons Library. Both this publication and "Agriculture in the UK" provide background details concerning trends in expenditure.

Public expenditure under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies

Expenditure (£million)

Financial Year	*Actual*	*In 1992 Prices*
1982-83	1,432·8	2,417·3
1983-84	1,728·5	2,785·6
1984-85	1,712·0	2,620·2
1985-86	2,164·6	3,143·0
1986-87	1,449·0	2,031·5
1987-88	1,630·0	2,189·6
1988-89	1,379·7	1,755·2
1989-90	1,258·0	1,479·6
1990-91	1,909·7	2,068·4
[1]1991-92	2,086·0	2,144·4

[1] Forecast

Sources: Annual Review of Agriculture—1987. Agriculture in the United Kingdom—1988-91.

Note: Expenditure in 1992 prices has been calculated with reference to the General Retail Price Index.

Floods and Drainage

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what responsibilities the proposed new Environmental Protection Agency will have in relation to flood and drainage.

Mr. Curry: It is envisaged that the proposed new Environment Agency will assume the responsibilities for flood defence and land drainage that the National Rivers Authority currently has.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what has been the total amount of expenditure on flood defence and drainage in each of the last three financial years to date; and what estimates there are for such expenditure in the 1993-94 budget;

(2) if he will give a breakdown of flood defence and drainage expenditure in the last financial year on a county basis.

Mr. Curry: MAFF expenditure on grant aid in support of capital works on flood defence, including sea defence, and arterial drainage, excluding coast protection works against erosion, is as follows:

	£ million
1990-91	25·5
1991-92	36·4
[1]1992-93	41·6

[1]Estimated.

On the same basis, provision for 1993-94 is £46·2 million.

A breakdown of expenditure on a county basis is not available except at disproportionate cost.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what evidence he has as to whether feeding pigs with material containing the infectious agent for BSE can result in a spongiform encephalopathy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body) on 17 February, *Official Report*, column *223*.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 9 March 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Court Procedure

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what consideration has been given to the setting up of a royal commission to investigate the operation of the courts.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No consideration has been given to the setting up of a royal commission to investigate the operation of the courts.

The operation of the criminal courts comes within the remit of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice which was established in 1991 to examine the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in England and Wales. The royal commission's report is expected in June.

Legal Aid

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the amount of legal aid paid in each year since 1982, adjusted for inflation.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Net expenditure on legal aid in each year since 1982 at 1992-93 cash prices, was as follows:

	£ million
1982-83	374
1983-84	394
1984-85	433
1985-86	479
1986-87	527
1987-88	597
1988-89	609
1989-90	679
1990-91	760
1991-92	945

Latest forecasts indicate net expenditure for the current financial year will amount to £1,122 million.

Child Residence Orders

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many shared residence orders have been granted since the Children Act 1989 was implemented; and how many sole residence orders have been granted to *(a)* mothers and *(b)* fathers.

Mr. John M. Taylor: This information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

Plutonium Nitrate

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will extend the scope of the interim measures following the MV Braer incident to include the shipment of plutonium nitrate in United Kingdom coastal waters.

Mr. Norris: The extension of these measures to this transport is not necessary. Plutonium nitrate solution is transported in packages designed to withstand the effects of severe maritime accidents.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment he makes of the risk to the environment from the result of a shipping/transport accident involving plutonium and breach of container;

(2) what measures have been taken to protect the environment in the event of a transport accident involving plutonium;

(3) what assessments have been made of the arrangements for preventing a casualty such as the Braer, or mitigating the effects of such a casualty, with a ship carrying plutonium nitrate.

Mr. Norris: A safety assessment of the combined road and sea transport operation for plutonium nitrate was carried out in 1978 by the nuclear installations inspectorate. The report of this assessment was placed in the House of Commons Library on 5 March 1980. It concluded that the probability of an accident severe enough to breach the container was no more than one in a million per year and the chances of an individual death from such a cause was no more than one in 100 million per year. A further assessment in 1984 confirmed these findings.

With oil tankers, the protection of the cargo lies in the ship, whereas with movements of radioactive material the protection lies in the strength of the packages which have been subject to extensive tests.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what surveys have been conducted as to the readiness of coastal protection services to cope with a shipping accident involving plutonium.

Mr. Norris: National, local and industrial contingency plans exist to deal with accidents involving the transportation of radioactive materials at sea. These plans are reviewed and exercised.

Crew Training

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list what type of training is available for ship owners who apply to the European Community crew training scheme; if it conforms to the International Maritime Organisation's criteria; how much funding is currently available; how ship owners can apply for these funds; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The European Commissioner for Transport has put forward proposals for improving maritime safety and these include minimum standards of training for crews employed in ships registered within the Community and a suggestion that Community funds might be used to assist nautical training institutions and

EC shipowners who provide on-board training but these are still in a tentative form. These will be discussed in future meetings of the Council of Ministers.

Speed Cameras

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the effect of the west London experiment with speed cameras in terms of savings in casualties and casualty costs.

Mr. Norris: Use of the cameras began on 15 October 1992; initial monitoring by the Transport Research Laboratory indicates that mean speeds have been reduced by more than 10 per cent. and that casualties also show a very encouraging downward trend. Monitoring will continue and it should be possible to give more information when statistically significant data are available.

Road Improvements, Westminster

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *143*, if he will list the location, cost and duration of the local road improvement schemes funded by his Department in the City of Westminster since 1979.

Mr. Norris: Between the years 1979 and 1986, road improvement schemes in the city of Westminster were the responsibility of the Greater London council or Westminster city council. The information on schemes during this period is not readily available and can only be provided at disproportionate cost. Since 1986 local roads have been the sole responsibility of Westminster city council. The following amounts of expenditure have been accepted for transport supplementary grant for the relevant financial years:—

	£ million
1986-87	1·016
1987-88	0·766
1988-89	1·070
1989-90	1·800
1990-91	1·384
1991-92	2·742
1992-93	5·852

One major scheme, costing more than £1 million in total, is included in these figures. This is the A404 Harrow Road/Ladbroke Grove widening scheme being carried out jointly by Westminster council and the Royal borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The following amounts of expenditure have been accepted for this scheme in Westminster for the relevant financial years:—

	£ million
1986-87	0·700
1987-88	0·434
1988-89	0·650
1989-90	1·300
1990-91	0·922
1991-92	0·855
1992-93	1·015

The start of this scheme has been delayed. Grant has been paid in anticipation of an earlier start date. The likely duration of the scheme is six years.

Other expenditure accepted for TSG support was for various minor works, under £1 million in total cost. These are paid as a block grant and are not scheme specific. Details of such schemes are not readily available.

Ferries (Sewage)

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *67*, if he will require all ferries operating out of United Kingdom ports to comply with United Kingdom regulations on the installation and operation of ships' sewage systems.

Mr. Norris: Agreement at the International Maritime Organisation will enable provision to be made for international requirements for sewage systems on passenger vessels. The United Kingdom will introduce the appropriate merchant shipping legislation to give these requirements full effect.

M1-M62 Link Road

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates he has made of the likely increase in traffic flow between junctions 38 and 39 of the M1 motorway resulting from the construction of an M1/M62 link road; and what estimate has been made of the cost of widening the M1 to four lanes between these junctions.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Construction of a new M1/M62 link road would affect traffic flows on the M1 and M62 motorways, the extent depending upon the route chosen. These effects are being taken into account as part of the assessment following public consultation last year.

The route options for this link road could affect traffic on the M1, between junctions 38 and 39, from between an increase of about 8,000 to a decrease of about 31,000 vehicles per day, using a theoretical opening year of 2000. Widening to dual-four lanes for the whole length between these junctions, which traffic would in any case justify if the link road was not built, would cost about £30 million.

Networker Trains (Kent)

Sir Roger Moate: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *816*, what is the current position with regard to the ordering of the proposed Networker express trains for the long-distance Kent coast service.

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. Friend and I have asked British Rail to tell us by Easter what rolling stock it proposes to lease using the £150 million leasing facility announced at the time of the autumn statement. Stock for Kent coast services is one of the options.

West Coast Main Line

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what level of investment his Department has planned for signalling and telecommunications equipment on the west coast main line railway link from London to Glasgow for the six years from 1994.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to determine its investment priorities within available resources. I understand that it intends to commence work soon on

renewing infrastructure on the west coast main line. The precise timing, and cost, will be decided in the spring, when British Rail has completed its next corporate plan.

Channel Tunnel (East Coast Link)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration is being given to the establishment of a direct through route from the east coast main line to the channel tunnel link railway; and if the north London line St. Pancras terminal is being considered as an option.

Mr. Freeman: Direct through services along the east coast main line to Paris and Brussels should begin at the end of 1995. These services are not dependent on the proposed new railway line between the channel tunnel and London, on which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will make an announcement as soon as possible.

Helicopters, London

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action his Department is taking over the proposal from Thames Heliport plc for a mobile helicopter pad on the Thames.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* The Department has urged the promoters of the scheme to consult as widely and as thoroughly as possible with interested parties. The promoters have said they will inform the Department about the outcome of their consultations.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Since November 1991, the following new services have been contracted out without market testing an in-house bid:

Establishment	*Successful contractor*	*Reason for excluding in-house bid*
Management of The Wolds prison	Group 4 Remand Services Ltd.	Contracting out provided opportunity to gain experience of such contracts, and provided comparator for catering services in establishments managed by Prison Service
Management of Blakenhurst prison	UK Detention Services Ltd.	
Catering services at following prison establishments		
Downview	Pall Mall Services Ltd.	Contracting out provided opportunity to gain experience in operation of such prisons and contracts, and provided a comparator for establishments managed by Prison Service
Belmarsh	Pall Mall Services Ltd.	
Bullingdon	ARA Catering Services Ltd.	
Holme House	Sutcliffe Catering Ltd.	
Woodhill	ARA Catering Services Ltd.	
Highdown	Sutcliffe Catering Services Ltd.	
Lancaster Farms	Sutcliffe Catering Services Ltd.	
Court Service, East Midlands and Humberside	Group 4 Court Services Ltd.	Aim was to relieve police and prison staff of these duties by providing an unitary integrated service

Police-Population Ratio

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the ratio of police to population in England and Wales; and what is the comparable data he has for France, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave on 2 February to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Mr. Sweeney), at column *128*. Comparable information for the European countries mentioned is not available.

Sentencing

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to amend section 29 of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 so that the courts may again take fully into account the whole criminal record of a convicted person when sentencing that person.

Mr. Jack: The sentencing provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991 were implemented on 1 October 1992. We are closely monitoring their effects, including the effects of section 29. In due course, we shall consider whether any amendments to the Act are necessary in the light of practical experience of its operation.

Rape

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions for rape there were in England in 1992; and how many resulted in sentences of *(a)* under 12 months, *(b)* one to five years, *(c)* over five to 10 years and *(d)* over 10 years.

Mr. Jack: 1992 data will not be available until autumn 1993. Information for 1991 is given in the table.

Number of males convicted of the offence of rape and sentenced to immediate custody by sentence length 1991
England

Offence description	Convictions	Sentenced to immediate custody	Length of sentence: Under one year	One year and up to but less than five years	Five years	Over five years up to and including 10 years	Over 10 years	Life
Rape								
Rape	434	403	7	100	74	189	22	11
Attempted rape	58	53	2	34	6	8	2	1
Other[1]	5	2	—	2	—	—	—	—
Total	497	458	9	136	80	197	24	12

[1] Includes man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective (Sexual Offences Act 1956 S 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 S 127); male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with female patient (Mental Health Act 1959 S 128(1)(a)); and man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care (Mental Health Act 1959 S 128(1)(b)).

Unlawful Killing

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which 10 London boroughs or local authority districts have the highest rates of unlawful killings in England and Wales expressed in terms of killings per 100,000 population.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Sex Offences

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures are being taken to minimise the chances that those convicted for sexual offences against children will re-offend.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Criminal Justice Act 1991 provides for sex offenders to be given custodial sentences where their conduct shows that such a sentence is necessary to protect the public from serious harm. Sex offenders can also be given longer sentences than is justified by the seriousness of the offence and extended supervision, if this is necessary for the protection of the public. Programmes to tackle the offending behaviour of those convicted of sexual offences against children are run by both the prison and probation services and are being expanded. The Government are also reviewing, and plan to extend, the arrangements for prison establishments to notify local authorities of the release of prisoners who have been convicted of offences against children.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were convicted for sexual offences against children in the years 1990, 1991 and 1992; and what percentage of those convicted had previously committed similar offences.

Mr. Jack To derive information on the number of offenders who had previously committed similar offences would involve disproportionate cost. Information on the number of persons convicted of sexual offences against children in England and Wales for the years 1989, 1990 and 1991 is given in the table. Figures for 1992 will not be available until the autumn. It is only possible from the information held centrally to identify sex offenders where the victim is known to be aged under 16 years.

Number of persons convicted of child sex offences 1989-91
England and Wales

Offence	1989	1990	1991
Buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	183	189	168
Attempt to commit buggery with a boy under the age of 16 or with a woman or an animal	26	18	26
Indecent assault on a male aged under 16 years	406	421	351
Indecent assault on a female aged under 16 years	1,657	1,537	1,469
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 13 years	96	110	105
Unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged under 16 years	262	304	223
Incest with a girl under 13 years	100	84	68
Inciting girl under 16 years to have incestuous sexual intercourse	5	3	3
Householder permitting unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl under 16 years	3	5	—
Person responsible for girl aged under 16 causing or encouraging her prostitution, etc	1	2	2
Abduction of unmarried girl aged under 16 years	13	8	8
Gross indecency with children	219	276	219

Young Offenders

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under what circumstances corporal punishment will be available in the new juvenile offenders institutions.

Mr. Jack: We do not believe that corporal punishment is an acceptable way of dealing with offenders. It was abolished under the 1948 Criminal Justice Act and the Government have no plans to reintroduce it. Corporal punishment, therefore, has no place in our planning for the new secure training centres.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *625*, what plans there are to increase the amounts committed to schemes aimed at diverting young people from crimes, including car crime; and if he will make a further statement.

Mr. Jack: The main Government programmes in the Greater Manchester area described in the reply I gave to the right hon. Member on 10 February, at column *625*, will

each receive funding in 1993-94. It is planned to increase total funding for the probation supervision grants scheme —PSGS—from £6·8 million this year to £10·4 million, £12 million and £13 million respectively over the next three financial years, but there are no plans to provide additional resources for the other additional resources for the other programmes. The PSGS helps voluntary organisations in partnership with probation services to provide support to defendants, those on community sentence and those released from prison with the aim of reducing reoffending.

Immigration

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many entry clearance applications were received in respect of India and Pakistan for each year since 1986 *(a)* for second wives where the first wife is resident in the United Kingdom, *(b)* first wife where the second wife is resident in the United Kingdom, *(c)* second wives where the first wife is resident in the country of origin, *(d)* the first wife where the second wife is resident in the country of origin and *(e)* both wives together.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is not available.

Sentencing

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to bring forward proposals to establish a sentencing council to establish a framework for sentencing policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have no plans to establish a sentencing council.

London Prisons

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* sentenced prisoners, *(b)* remand prisoners and *(c)* fine defaulters were received into each London prison each week in January 1992, March 1992, June 1992, September 1992, January 1993 and March 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The available information is given in the table. Data for September 1992 to March 1993 are not yet available.

Initial Receptions into Prison Service Establishments in London by Type of Custody: January, March and June 1992

Establishment	*Number of Persons Received*														
	January					*March*					*June*				
	1-4	*5-11*	*12-18*	*19-25*	*26-31*	*1-7*	*8-14*	*15-21*	*22-28*	*29-31*	*1-6*	*7-13*	*14-20*	*21-27*	*28-30*
Belmarsh															
Remand[1]	32	63	60	45	37	59	49	52	35	16	62	47	49	43	19
Sentenced															
Fine Defaulters	2	16	12	9	5	6	7	2	2	1	10	7	6	6	2
Others	11	28	34	23	34	36	20	38	27	8	27	52	32	28	13
Brixton															
Remand[1]	16	32	29	46	38	37	27	31	27	13	46	38	35	47	23
Sentenced															
Fine Defaulters	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Others	32	88	80	74	84	124	114	88	110	48	79	90	90	60	31
Pentonville															
Remand[1]	19	47	66	65	76	75	51	64	66	20	55	58	46	50	20
Sentenced															
Fine Defaulters	1	6	7	15	19	5	7	7	14	4	12	11	8	13	3
Others	7	36	25	22	36	36	29	29	35	9	40	42	35	34	12
Wandsworth															
Remand[1]	3	1	4	4	1	1	5	1	3	1	7	6	10	5	2
Sentenced															
Fine Defaulters	—	3	—	4	4	1	4	5	2	3	3	5	7	5	—
Others	3	5	6	9	6	8	6	12	4	2	11	15	7	25	7
Wormwood Scrubs															
Remand[1]	46	94	113	128	110	119	88	98	85	41	50	104	49	80	58
Sentenced															
Fine Defaulters	10	16	36	18	18	7	13	17	16	1	3	8	7	11	1
Others	28	49	49	44	52	51	43	35	39	12	21	19	29	21	9
Holloway															
Remand[1]	14	35	38	39	35	33	34	46	33	11	40	30	34	24	13
Sentenced															
Fine Defaulters	1	13	9	11	8	10	5	7	7	2	5	6	9	3	4
Others	9	15	28	25	29	28	20	21	18	5	19	16	18	21	10

[1] Includes untried and convicted unsentenced prisoners.

Police Stations

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list all those constituencies which do not have a police station within their boundaries.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Show Jumping

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what arrangements his Department makes to issue licences for show jumping events; if such licences stipulate the height and type of jump or any other obstacles; and what inspection or enforcement his Department carries out of show jumping events;

(2) what arrangements are made for his Department's officials to inspect the condition of show jumping horses or the suitability of the type and height of jumps at major show jumping events; what guidance his Department gives to official bodies representing show jumping on the welfare implications of show jumping courses to horses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. However, I understand that anyone wishing to run an event under the rules of the British Show Jumping Association must apply to the association for authority to do so, and must run the event according to those rules. The welfare of show jumping horses, like that of all domestic and captive animals, is covered by the Protection of Animals Act 1911, under which it is an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to any animal.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Racial Hatred

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases of incitement to racial hatred have been referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions each year since the Race Relations Act 1976 came into force; how many of these cases resulted in a prosecution; how many of these prosecutions were successful; and, of the successful prosecutions, how many resulted in a custodial sentence.

The Attorney-General: No records are kept of the numbers of cases referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions categorised by reference to specific criminal offences.

Details of prosecutions for incitement to racial hatred since 1986, each of which may involve more than one defendant, are kept and are as follows:

Year	*Prosecutions*	*Results*	*Sentence*
1986	5	4 convictions	1 × 1 year's imprisonment 1 × 2 months' imprisonment 1 × £400 fine and costs 1 × conditional discharge for 12 months
		1 acquittal	
1987	0		
1988	1	1 conviction	£100 fine
1989	1	1 conviction	9 months' imprisonment suspended for 2 years
1990	1	Bound over	
1991	4	3 convictions	1 × 8 months' imprisonment (6 suspended and 2 to be served) 1 × bound over in £100 1 × conditional discharge for 2 years
		1 defendant died after committal	
1992	1	discontinued	
1993	2	1 conviction	6 months' imprisonment
		1 acquittal	

SCOTLAND

Student Accommodation

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many students that have attended each of the separate higher educational institutes in Scotland have stayed in *(a)* their own home, *(b)* the parental home, *(c)* institutional accommodation and *(d)* private sector accommodation in each year since 1985.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 February 1993]:* This information is not held centrally.

Dog Registration

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recommendations were made to him on the dog registration scheme by the Scottish working group on dogs; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* The remit of the Scottish working group on dogs did not include dog registration. No recommendations were therefore made.

Juvenile Crime

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to deal with the increase in juvenile crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* Under the Lord Advocate's direction of 1987 most juvenile offenders up to age 16 are referred to the reporter to the children's panel to consider compulsory measures of care. In 1990 24,700 referrals were made to reporters. Children's panels have available to them the full range of disposals from home supervision and foster care to residential care and secure accommodation to enable them to deal effectively with juvenile offending.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Goodlad: Since November 1991, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has added the collection of premiums for the diplomatic service worldwide all-risks insurance scheme to the contract with Bowring, Marsh, McLennan, the company which operates the scheme. There was no in-house bid. Renegotiation of the contract led to a saving of £10,000 and one post.

The Overseas Development Administration has not contracted out any function without organising an in-house bid since November 1991.

Bosnia

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our EC partners believe that the Bosnian peace process, under the auspices of the international conference for the former Yugoslavia, represents the best chance for a settlement and an end to prolonged conflict and suffering. Negotiations are at a crucial stage. We are also devoting considerable resources to the provision of humanitarian relief to those caught up in the war.

Mr. J. G. Glass

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the sworn affidavit made on 24 May 1990 by Her Majesty's consul in Baghdad relating to the death of Mr. J. G. Glass was sent to the coroner's court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British embassy in Baghdad sent the then consul's sworn affidavit to the appropriate coroner's office who passed it to the head coroner before the inquest on 28 August 1990.

So far as we are aware, the Iraqi authorities have charged no one with any crime in connection with the death of Mr. Glass.

Prerogative Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions since 1987 the Government have bound the United Kingdom under international law by virtue of Ministers' prerogative powers; and on which of these occasions prior approval was sought from Parliament.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Ministers do not have prerogative powers. All treaties entered into by the United Kingdom are concluded by Her Majesty's Government exercising the royal prerogative on behalf of the Crown. Ratification of treaties only exceptionally requires prior parliamentary approval, but all treaties which are subject to ratification are brought to Parliament's attention by being laid before both Houses for a minimum of 21 days. If primary or secondary legislation is required in order to ensure compliance with obligations arising under a treaty, the Government will not ratify a treaty until such legislation has been implemented. The information sought regarding which treaties required prior approval or legislation is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Zaire

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government made to the Government of Zaire concerning human rights.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are gravely concerned about the widespread abuses of human rights in Zaire, caused notably by the lack of control of the security forces. We intend to support a resolution at the current session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights deploring the continued serious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Zaire.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tools for Self Reliance

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from the Tools for Self Reliance campaign; and what action he is taking to assist the replenishment and supply of tools to developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received a number of representations as a result of the Tools for Self Reliance campaign. The supply of appropriate technology, including hand tools, forms part of many of our aid projects, both those we support directly and those managed by non-governmental organisations. These include rural development projects, promotion of small enterprises and agricultural rehabilitation following natural or manmade disasters.

South Africa

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the South African Government about their continued detention of black South African political prisoners in contravention of the Pretoria minute, signed in 1990, and the Further Idemnity Bill, gazetted in 1992.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have made it clear to the South African Government, and to all other concerned parties that the question of political prisoners and any other remaining disagreements should be resolved as soon as possible and should not be allowed to adversely affect progress on constitutional negotiations.

HEALTH

Oral Contraceptives

Ms. Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answers of 5 February, to the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms. Primarolo), *Official*

Report, columns *376-77*, and 11 February, to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe), *Official Report*, columns *757-59*, which brands of oral contraceptives are currently available on prescription; and if she will list *(a)* the hormone dosages and *(b)* the cost of a month's supply for Eugynon 50, Minilyn, Minovlar, Minovlar ED, Norimin and Ovulen 50.

Dr. Mawhinney: The brands of oral contraceptives available on prescription are as follows:

Combined Oral Contraceptives
- Binovum
- Brevinor
- Cilest
- Conova 30
- Eugynon 30
- Femodene
- Femodene ED
- Loestrin 20
- Loestrin 30
- Logynon
- Logynon ED
- Marvelon
- Mercilon
- Microgynon 30
- Minulet
- Neocon 1·35
- Norimin
- Norinyl-1
- Ortho-Novin 1/50
- Ovran
- Ovran 30
- Ovranette
- Ovysmen
- Synphase
- Tiadene
- Tri-minulet
- Triordiol
- Trinovum
- Trinovum ED

Emergency Contraception
- Schering PC4

Progesterone-only Contraceptives
- Femulen
- Micronor
- Microval
- Neogest
- Norgeston
- Noriday

Eugynon 50, Minilyn, Minovlar, Minovlar ED and Ovulen 50 have been discontinued. The hormone dosages and price of Norimin are as follows:

Active constituents	*Price (one month's supply)*
Norethisterone 1mg. Ethinyloestadiol 35 micrograms	65p

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research has been carried out into the side effects of cheaper varieties of the oral contraceptive pill; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Before any medicinal product may be marketed in the United Kingdom it is subject to stringent testing for safety, quality, and efficacy to enable a product licence to be granted by the licensing authority. Thereafter the safety of all licensed medicinal products is carefully monitored. Neither the licensing authority nor its advisory committee, the Committee on Safety of Medicines has the remit to take into consideration the cost of a medicine.

General Practitioners

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has establishing the cost-effectiveness of those general practitioner services for which practitioners receive an item of service payment.

Dr. Mawhinney: Within the general practitioner remuneration system, item of service fees are paid in a wide variety of circumstances, some to promote specific health policies—for example, for certain immunisations—and others to reflect variations in workload—for example, for providing treatment in the case of an accident involving a patient not on the practice list. There is no single way of measuring cost effectiveness in all such cases.

NHS Employees (Freedom of Speech)

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the final guidelines on freedom of speech for NHS employees will be published.

Dr. Mawhinney: We expect the final guidance to be issued shortly.

Elderly People, Newcastle

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate for the number of adults aged over 65, over 75 and over 85 years in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne *(a)* in 1982 and *(b)* in each year since 1986.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table. The figures for 1991 are not fully comparable with those for earlier years. The provisional 1991 estimates have been based upon early 1991 census results, and are considerably more reliable than the current estimates for earlier years. The final estimates for 1991 will be issued in June 1993, after which the estimates for 1982-1990 will be revised to provide a consistent time series using data for both the 1981 and the 1991 censuses.

Population estimates for Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Thousands

Year	*1982*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*[1]
Persons aged 65 and over	46·4	46·5	47·0	46·8	46·8	46·4	46·0
Persons aged 75 and over	18·8	20·0	20·6	20·8	21·1	21·1	20·4
Persons aged 85 and over	3·4	4·0	4·3	4·5	4·8	4·9	4·7

[1] More reliable estimate based upon early 1991 Census results; not fully comparable with earlier estimates.
Source: Population Estimates Unit, OPCS.

Consultants

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients saw a consultant *(a)* on their first visit and *(b)* generally in out-patients in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally.

Medical Practices Committee

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the annual cost of the Medical Practices Committee for each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table.

Year	*Budget (£)*
1988-89	294,000
1989-90	—
1990-91	340,000
1991-92	408,000
1992-93	358,000

Note: The budget for 1989-90 cannot be identified separately.

Specialist Training

Ms. Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Chief Medical Officer's working group to re-evaluate the United Kingdom approach to specialist training will report.

Dr. Mawhinney: The working group was established to review arrangements for specialist training in the United Kingdom, in the light of the EC medical directives. The group's work is now nearing completion and its report will be published shortly.

Hospital Treatment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give *(a)* the number of in-patients treated, *(b)* the number of out-patients treated, *(c)* the number of day cases treated and *(d)* the number of emergency cases treated by health authority and trust in England and Wales in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information for health authorities on in-patients and day cases for 1989-90 and 1990-91 is published in "Ordinary Admissions, Day Cases Admissions and Regular Day and Night Admissions, England, Financial Year 1990-91". Information about out-patients and accident and emergency attenders is included in "Out-Patients and Ward Attenders, England, Financial Year 1989-90", "Out-Patients and Ward Attenders, England and Regions, Financial Year 1990-91" and "Out-Patients and Ward Attenders, Districts, Financial Year 1990-91". These documents are available in the Library. Information for 1991-92 will be published shortly in these series of publications and copies will be placed in the Library. The 1991-92 editions will include information for the first wave of national health service trusts, established on 1 April 1991.

Fire Safety

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which national health service premises in England at 31 December 1992 failed to hold a valid fire certificate; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not held centrally. Health authorities and national health service trusts are required to apply to their local fire authority for fire certificates for those premises which require them under fire precautions legislation, and to agree with the fire authority a programme for rectifying any deficiencies.

Service Arrangements

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the basis of the service arrangements between provider and purchaser authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: The national health service management executive has recently issued two pieces of guidance on contracting to purchasers and providers—EL(92)79,

"Review of contracting-guidance for the 1993-94 contracting cycle" and EL(93)10—"Managing activity and change through contracting." Copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether purchaser health authorities can limit the hospitals to which general practitioners can send patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: No.

Extra Referrals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a list of health authorities in England which on 31 January had placed limitations on extra-contractual referrals.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally. However, it has always been recognised that purchasers may need to manage the timing of the commitment of funds for some extra-contractual referrals, in the same way as they do for contracted services.

NHS Chairmen and Directors

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the names of the chairmen of each national health service trust and health authority in England, showing their professional qualifications and employment.

Dr. Mawhinney: For details on chairmen of national health service trusts, I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 2 February 1993, to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), at column *153*.

A list of all chairmen of health authorities in England is shown in the table.

Information on the professional qualifications and employment of NHS trust and health authority chairmen is not held centrally.

East Anglian Region

DHAs Chairmen
Cambridge—Mr. R. A. King
East Suffolk—Mr. N. A. Ridley
Great Yarmouth and Waveney—Mr. R. Duncan
Huntingdon—Mr. I. Langworthy
North West Anglia—Mr. J. W. F. Durance
Norwich—Mr. M. G. Falcon
West Suffolk—Mr. M. D. Corke

FHSA Chairmen
Cambridgeshire—Mrs. M. Scott
Norfolk—Mrs. J. L. Hopwood
Suffolk—Mrs. J. Spicer

Oxford Region

DHA Chairmen
Aylesbury Vale—Mrs. G. M. Miscampbell
East Berkshire—Mr. R. W. F. Eassie
Kettering—Mr. R. E. Button
Milton Keynes—Mr. T. Benyon
Northampton—Mr. S. G. Schanschieff
Oxfordshire—Dr P. Iredale
West Berkshire—Mr. R. E. Lucas
Wycombe—Mr. M. Baxter

FHSA Chairmen
Berkshire—Mr. G. H. Odds
Buckinghamshire—Mr. P. D. M. Gell
Northamptonshire—Mrs. S. Barnes
Oxfordshire—Mrs D. Levy

Trent Region

DHA Chairmen
Barnsley—Mrs. A. J. Cook
Doncaster—Mr. J. G. S. Smith
Leicestershire—Mr. N. F. Townsend
North Derbyshire—Mr. R. B. Robinson
North Lincolnshire—Mrs. K. L. Hall
North Nottinghamshire—Mr. A. Tolhurst
Nottingham—Mr. D. H. White
Rotherham—Mr. A. G. Baker
Sheffield—Mr. J. Neill
Southern Derbyshire—Mr. G. Rudd
South Lincolnshire—Dr. J. D. Brackenridge

FHSA Chairmen
Barnsley—Vacancy
Derbyshire—Mr. M. S. Boissier
Doncaster—Mr. K. Jones
Leicestershire—Dr. G. F. Edmondson-Jones
Lincolnshire—Mr. P. W. R. Pumfrey
Nottinghamshire—Mr. M. Dessau
Rotherham—Mr. P. Andrew
Sheffield—Mrs. L. Gladwin

West Midland Region

DHA Chairmen
Coventry—Mr. A. R. Guy
Dudley—Mrs. M. G. Fenton
East Birmingham—Mr. N. R. Thompson
Herefordshire—Mr. J. E. Bulmer
Mid-Staffs—Mr. B. Liss
North Birmingham—Dr. M. D. Skillicorn
North Staffs—Mr. M. J. Procter
North East Warwickshire—Mr. G. N. Jackson
North Worcestershire—Mr. M. Cooper
Sandwell—Mr. C. V. Wilkinson
Shropshire—Cllr. D. G. Lloyd
Solihull—Mr. R. W. Fordham
South Birmingham—Mr. F. C. Graves
South East Staffs—Cllr. M. Stanhope
South Warwickshire—Mrs F. J. Burman
Walsall—Mr. M. R. Wolverson
West Birmingham—Mr. G. A. D. Goghlan
Wolverhampton—Mr. R. M Carver
Worcester—Mr. A. J. Prescott

FHSA Chairmen
Birmingham—Mrs. C. M. Vaughan-Griffiths
Coventry—Mr. B. Stoten
Dudley—Mr. A. J. Waldron
Herefordshire and Worcestershire—Mrs. E. F. Metcalfe
Sandwell—Mr A. M. T. Sealey
Shropshire—Mr. Z. J. Nilski
Solihull—Mrs. A. Woolley
Staffordshire—Mr. P. E. Jones
Walsall—Mr. J. A. Howell
Warwickshire—Mr. R. R. G. Gardner
Wolverhampton—Ms T. A. Evans

Mersey Region

DHAs Chairmen
Chester—Mr. J. Ross
Crewe—Vacancy
Halton—Vacancy
Liverpool—Mr. D. H. Tod
Macclesfield—Mr. S. H. Cussons
Southport and Formby—Mr. F. R. Ludlow
South Sefton—Vacancy
St. Helens and Knowsley—Mr. G. Murray
Warrington—Mr. D. Hannah
Wirral—Mr. R. S. Gordon

FHSA Chairmen
Cheshire—Vacancy
Liverpool—Mrs. R. Hawley
St. Helens and Knowsley—Mr. J. E. Dray
Sefton—Mr. C. D. D. Darley
Wirral—Mrs. M. Pearce

Northern Region

DHA Chairmen
Darlington—Mr. I. Cordial
East Cumbria—Mr. I. C. Carr
Gateshead—Mr. J. W. Dowdeswell
Hartlepool—Cllr. B. Hanson
Newcastle—Mr. A. Crute
North Tees—Mr. D. J. Otter
North Tyneside—Cllr. S. M. Murray
Northumberland—Mr. J. R. Baker
North Durham—Prof. J. I. Clarke
South Cumbria—Mrs. A. S. Graham
South Tees—Mr. P. A. Marsden
South Tyneside—Mr. W. M. Darling
South West Durham—Mrs. E. R. Wallis
Sunderland—Mr. G. Bedell
West Cumbria—Vacancy

FHSA Chairmen
Cleveland—Mr. T. J. O'Connor
Cumbria—Mr. J. R. Wills
Durham—Mr. I. G. Bonas
Gateshead—Mrs. B. Balls
Newcastle—Mr. C. P. Douglas
North Tyneside—Mrs. K. Johnston
Northumberland—Dr. C. J. Robinson
South Tyneside—Mr. A. G. Brown
Sunderland—Mr. J. D. S. Brown

North Western Region

DHA Chairmen
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley—Mr. W. I. Woolley
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde—Mr. R. T. Parkinson
Bolton—Mr. T. Taylor
Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale—Mr. W. Ashworth
Bury—Mr. E. S. Schofield
Central Manchester—Prof. J. R. Moore
Chorley and South Ribble—Vacancy
Lancaster—Prof. A. Smith
North Manchester—Mr. D. G. Wilson
Oldham—Mr. J. Downs
Preston—Mr. J. Hood
Rochdale—Cllr. P. N. E. Hawton
Salford—Dr. F. B. Beswick
South Manchester—Mr. J. P. B. Hadfield
Stockport—Mr. F. Russell
Tameside and Glossop—Cllr. J. B. Leck
Trafford—Mrs. S. D. Alexander
West Lancashire—Dr. K. V. Rowsell
Wigan—Mr. G. N. Hague

FHSA Chairmen
Bolton—Mrs. L. Pickford
Bury—Mr. B. Wood
Lancashire—Mr. C. E. Jeanes
Manchester—Prof. Joan Higgins
Oldham—Mr. M. R. Farrar
Rochdale—Mr. L. M. Price
Salford—Mr. E. Parker
Stockport—Mr. S. D. McGeorge
Tameside—Mrs. A. E. Corrie
Trafford—Mr. D. Higginbottom
Wigan—Mr. J. McDonald

Yorkshire Region

DHA Chairmen
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Bradford—Ms Z. Manzoor
Calderdale—Vacancy
Dewsbury—Mr. I. F. Pattison
East Yorkshire—Prof. G. A. Smith
Grimsby—Mr. R. Blair
Huddersfield—Mr. P. E. Wood
Hull—Vacancy
Leeds—Mrs. P. V. Smith
Pontefract—Vacancy
Scunthorpe—Vacancy
Wakefield—Mr. B. Hayward

FHSA Chairmen
Bradford—Mr. J. A. Fergusson
Calderdale—Mr. B. Calverley
Humberside—Mrs. V. Pettifer
Kirklees—Mr. P. Sarathy
Leeds—Mrs. D. Scott
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Wakefield—Mr. D. A. Travis

North East Thames Region

DHA Chairmen
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Basildon and Thurrock—Mr. G. F. Gould
Bloomsbury and Islington—Mr. R. Everington
City and Hackney—Mrs. F. Heidensohn
Enfield—Mr. D. G. Kleeman
Hampstead—Mrs. A. M. Killick
Haringey—Mr. L. A. Bains
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Newham—Mrs R. A. Walters
North East Essex—Mr. A. Sexton
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Southend—Mr. D. R. Micklem
Tower Hamlets—Mr. R. M. Brew
Waltham Forest—Mr. L. Knox
West Essex—Mrs. J. C. Martin

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Camden and Islington—Mrs. A. Burgess
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Enfield and Haringey—Mr. B. Blackler
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Redbridge and Waltham Forest—Mr. C. Heginbotham

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Brighton—Mr. J. Spiers
Bromley—Mr. J. A. Cumming
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Greenwich—vacancy
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South East Kent—Mr. J. A. Lawton
Tunbridge Wells—Mr. P. H. Edgley
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Somerset—Mr. D. F. Strachan

Wessex Region

DHA Chairmen
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Bath—Mr. E. S. Jenkins
Dorset—Maj. Gen. R. C. Keightley
Isle of Wight—Mr. A. Medley
Portsmouth and South East Hants—Dr. A. J. Taylor
Salisbury—Maj. Gen. R. Crossley
Southampton and South West Hants—Prof. J. B. L. Howell
Swindon—Mr. D. Hulme
Winchester—Mr. N. Jonas

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Hampshire—Mr. D. Paterson
Isle of Wight—Dr. D. E. Ferguson-Hudson
Wiltshire—Mrs. J. Perons

RHA Chairmen
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Sir Bryan Askew, Yorkshire RHA
Sir Michael Carlisle, Trent RHA
Sir Colin Walker, East Anglian RHA
Sir William Doughty, North West Thames RHA
Sir William Staveley, North East Thames RHA
Peter Barker, South East Thames RHA
Professor Marian Hicks OBE, South West Thames RHA
Sir Robin Buchanan, Wessex RHA
Dr. Stuart Burgess CBE, Oxford RHA
Ms Rennie Fritchie, South Western RHA
Sir Donald Wilson DL, West Midlands RHA
Professor A. M. Breckenridge, Mersey RHA
Sir Bruce Martin QC, North Western RHA

Political Donations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to require all national health service tenderers to declare political contributions and health authorities to record such declarations in their minutes.

Mr. Sackville: No.

Rehabilitation Facilities

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to extend day and residential rehabilitation facilities staffed by skilled personnel including physiotherapists and occupational therapists for the care of elderly patients discharged into the community.

Mr. Yeo: A wide range of rehabilitation facilities exists within the national health service and local social services authorities. Decisions about rehabilitation services are for the professional judgment of those concerned with the individual case.

European Population Conference

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who will make up the United Kingdom's delegation to the European population conference to be held in Geneva in March.

Mr. Sackville: The delegation will be led by the director of statistics from the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, and also have officials from the Home Office and Overseas Development Administration, and an academic expert who is a member of the British Society for Population Studies.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the country statement for the United Kingdom for the European population conference will be made available for hon. Members before the conference.

Mr. Sackville: Copies of the United Kingdom country statement are now available in the Library.

Stillbirth

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the impact of the new definition of stillbirth will be on statistics of perinatal mortality.

Mr. Sackville: The Government were pleased to be able to support Rosie Barnes's private Member's Bill which resulted in the extension of the definition of stillbirth to include losses at 24 to 27 weeks' gestation. The loss of a baby in these circumstances is a tragedy for the family involved and it is clearly right that there should be proper and formal recognition. Extending the definition from 28 weeks to 24 weeks has made that possible.

In terms of published statistics on stillbirth it is estimated that the inclusion of these losses will mean, at present rates, approximately 800 more registered stillbirths in England and Wales annually.

It is important not only that the effect of the new definition should be reflected in the routine statistics but that trends can continue to be the subject of monitoring and analysis in spite of the change. For this reason, future Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publications

over the next few years will contain data on trends with and without stillbirths in the 24 to 27-week period as from 1 October 1992, the operative date of the new definition.

That latest published figure for the rate of perinatal mortality—stillbirths and deaths in the first week of life—in England and Wales in 1991 was eight per 1,000 live and stillbirths. This is the lowest ever recorded. Published data will continue to include both single-year figures on the old and new basis and averages over the most recent three-year period for which we have comparative data. Single-year figures, especially for regional and other sub-national analyses, can be volatile now that the rates are so low. Therefore, the combined three-year average provides a more reliable indication of underlying trends at these levels as well as nationally.

The national health service continues to give a high priority to the further reduction of stillbirths, including full participation in the nationwide confidential inquiry into stillbirths and deaths in infancy.

NHS Trusts (Fund-raising)

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the extent of the use of private fund-raising companies by NHS trusts; what guidelines he has issued on good practice and on the allocation of money so raised; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No assessment has been made and no guidelines have been issued. These matters are well within the competence of individual trust boards.

Hospital Beds

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide a table showing the number of hospital beds available by specialty in each region in each year since 1979-80 and currently.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 25 February at column *676*.

School Medical Services

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those local health authorities which have ceased to carry out annual dental check-ups on school children.

Dr. Mawhinney: The current guidance to local health authorities suggests that they should arrange for the screening of teeth of children in state-funded schools at least three times in each child's school life. The Department has no information which suggests that health authorities are not doing so.

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many school nurses were employed in the state education sector in 1992, 1985 and 1979.

Mr. Sackville: The latest information available, which reflects the 20 per cent. increase in general practitioners since 1979 and their increased involvement in child health care, is shown in the table.

NHS school nurses[1] in post at 30 September each year, England

	Whole-time equivalents[2]
[3]1979	3,810
1985	3,110
1991	3,050

[1] Figures include school health visitors. Statistics on the number of nurses in particular areas of work are prone to errors in employing authorities' coding procedures. The above figures should therefore be treated with caution.
[2] All figures are independently rounded to the nearest ten (10) whole-time equivalents.
[3] Figures for 1979 have been adjusted for the reduction in nurses working hours during 1980-81 (from 40 to 37·5 hours per week).

Children in Hospital

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to centralise information on child patients in hospitals as a step towards ensuring that no child will be treated on an adult ward.

Mr. Sackville: In the guide, "Welfare of Children and Young People in Hospital"—HMSO 1991—we cited the evidence to show that children are best treated in children's departments and recommended that health authorities and other purchasers should specify this requirement in their contracts for hospital services for children. We expect district health authorities to monitor compliance with their contracts and, in connection with implementation of the recent Audit Commission report "Children First: A Study of Hospital Services", both regional health authorities and the Department will also undertake selective monitoring. We consider that implementation of our policy can be achieved by these means without the introduction of routine arrangements for the central collection of records on where children are accommodated in hospital. Copies of both publications are available in the Library.

Salford and Manchester Authorities

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations have been received in favour of the proposed consortia of Salford and Manchester health authorities; and how many against the proposal.

Dr. Mawhinney: In the three months since the proposed consortium was announced, seven letters have been received, all of which were opposed to plans to form a consortium.

Children's Care

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what special guidelines are issued to local authorities which have care and responsibility for children with physical or mental disabilities in order to ensure protection from abuse and early detection of abuse.

Mr. Yeo: There are no special child protection guidelines of this kind. "Working Together under the Children Act 1989", the Government's guidance on inter-agency co-operation in the protection of children from abuse, applies to all children including children with physical or mental disabilities. "Working Together" emphasises that children with disabilities have the same rights as other children, and that every effort should be made to provide appropriate assistance during an

investigative interview so that they can express themselves fully and understand what is happening and what decisions have to be made.

NHS Transport, Leeds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the costs of the transport contract to carry national health service staff from Leeds station to the NHS executive offices at Quarry Hill, Leeds.

Mr. Sackville: Nil. The cost of the transport contract to carry Department of Health staff is £636 per week.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the Valuation Office agency carried out a valuation of all property assets in all trusts prior to NHS trust status being granted.

Mr. Sackville: The Valuation Office agency carried out a valuation of all property assets—land and buildings—transferred to trusts in the first and second waves, as at 1 April 1991 and 1 April 1992 respectively. Similar arrangements are in place for the third wave trusts to be established as at 1 April 1993.

Prior to trust status being granted, the results from the periodic capital valuations of all property within the national health service estate would have been available locally to the trusts and health authorities concerned. The periodic valuations were carried out, as at 31 December 1989 and 1 April 1992, by the Valuation Office agency, which also provided indices to update the valuations in the intervening years.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *303*, if, in valuing the assets of a hospital, other than land and buildings, before acquiring NHS trust status, her Department required a common method for each hospital for determining the value of the assets; and what arrangements were made for an external audit to take place before the assets were vested in the NHS trust.

Mr. Sackville: The Department issues instructions which establish how all categories of assets that transfer to a trust should be valued. These instructions are based on existing departmental guidance and standard accounting practice. The valuation of all assets transferring is subjected to external audit.

NHS Management

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are being taken to monitor the performance of national health service administrators/management; and what use is being made of outside management consultants to set performance indicators for this group.

Dr. Mawhinney: Performance measures for individual managers of any discipline can only be set by the national health service trust board or authority through the normal management process. A national individual performance review scheme has existed since 1986 for general and senior managers throughout the NHS. Arrangements for performance review of other staff is a matter for individual employing authorities. Under the health service reforms, NHS trusts have the freedom to develop their own performance review systems and a number have done so using design advice from external management consultants.

Children's Hospices

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to allowing children's hospices to become eligible for hospice funding in the coming financial year; and whether she will seek to include children's hospices in the list of eligible organisations in future guidance on hospice funding to be issued to regional health authorities.

Mr. Yeo: The central funds allocated for voluntary hospices to health authorities will be delegated from 1994-95 in order that they may contract for services for both adults and children with life-threatening illness. Meanwhile the recently issued guidance—executive letter EL(93)14—copies of which are available in the Library, on central funding in 1993-94 does not include any age restriction on the use to which the funds may be put.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing for each month from January to June 1992 *(a)* the number of actual emergency calls responded to by the London ambulance service and *(b)* the number and percentage responded to within (i) 14, (ii) 20, (iii) 25, (iv) 30, (v) 40, and (vi) 50 or more minutes together with respective totals; and if she will publish consolidated totals in respect of the national Orcon standards for each month.

Mr. Sackville: The information available is shown in the table.

Accident and Emergency Ambulance Response Times—London Ambulance Service (LAS)

1992	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*
Number of calls responded to within 8 minutes	5,369	3,752	3,139	4,470	4,629	3,746
Percentage of calls responded to within 8 minutes	14	10	9	12	12	9
Number of calls responded to within 14 minutes	25,011	20,959	18,869	23,535	24,369	21,576
Percentage of calls responded to within 14 minutes	64	55	53	63	61	53
Number of calls responded to within 20 minutes	34,712	32,011	29,512	32,943	34,779	32,981
Percentage of calls responded to within 20 minutes	88	83	82	88	86	81
Number of calls responded to within 25 minutes	37,324	35,468	32,885	35,354	37,685	36,686
Percentage of calls responded to within 25 minutes	95	92	92	95	94	90

(Information supplied by the LAS)

A breakdown of call response times above 25 minutes could be obtained only at disproportionate cost to the London ambulance service.

Elderly People (Care)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what legislation exists to regulate independent companies which are providing continuing care for the elderly; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Statutory control of homes providing long-term care for anyone who needs it is provided under the provisions of the Registered Homes Act 1984 and its associated regulations.

Independent Living Fund

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 November 1992, to the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), *Official Report*, column *809*, if the extra funding to local authorities as part of the arrangements for replacing the independent living fund will be ring-fenced for purposes currently covered by the independent living fund.

Mr. Yeo: No. The extra funding is included in the special transitional grant which is itself ring-fenced solely for use on community care.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 26 November 1992 to the hon. Member from Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), *Official Report*, column *809*, if the extra funding to local authorities as part of the arrangements to replace the independent living fund will be used for cash grants for those in need of help to remain in their own homes.

Mr. Yeo: No. Local authorities have no powers to make cash payments.

Organ Donors

Mr. Ernie Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the objectives are of her organ donor campaign; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: There are many patients whose lives could be saved or enhanced by an organ transplant. The Government aim to encourage more people to consider organ donation. We have, therefore, commissioned a television campaign to provoke discussion on donation in the hope that more people will carry the donor card, and more importantly, let their families know of their wishes.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the answer of 11 May 1992, *Official Report*, column *31*, what is her estimate for what proportion of prescriptions, for which a prescription charge is paid, the cost of the item to the NHS will be less than the prescription charge under the prescription charge levels for 1993-94 announced on 16 March.

Dr. Mawhinney: The flat-rate prescription charge is an amount which successive Governments have thought it reasonable for those who can afford to do so to contribute towards the cost of national health service pharmaceutical services. It is not, and never has been, directly related either to the particular item prescribed or to the actual cost to the NHS of dispensing it. About 80 per cent. of prescribed items dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors are free of charge. For 1993-94 it is estimated that some 35 per cent. of chargeable items will cost the NHS less than the new charge of £4·25 announced on Tuesday 2 March.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish an explanation of note (1) to section A of his departmental press notice P/93/51 of 4 February on plutonium production and stockpile figures, on why exact figures for the plutonium content of fuel discharged and dispatched cannot be given.

Mr. Eggar: It is not practicable to make direct measurements of the plutonium content of fuel rods at the power station. Accordingly, the figures in question are estimates, calculated using reactor physics computer codes, based on the characteristics of the fresh fuel and the output of the reactor since the fuel was loaded. The error margin specified reflects the accuracy of this estimating process.

Auditing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to propose legislation under which shareholders would be able to seek compensation from the recognised supervisory bodies for recommending passive auditing standards.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have no such plans.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers he has to examine the sale of the agenda papers by the Auditing Practices Board.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The powers that might be available would depend upon the nature of the complaint.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what advice and measures he has taken to ensure that the terms of the proposed fuel cycle contract between Nuclear Electric and British Nuclear Fuels plc will not operate against the public interest.

Mr. Eggar: Both BNFL and Nuclear Electric are wholly owned by the Government. Nonetheless, it is the Government's policy that each company should act in a commercial manner, since this best serves the taxpayer's interest as shareholder. This need to act commercially will be reflected in the terms of any contract negotiated between the two companies.

Consultants

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to Arthur Andersen and Kleinwort Benson with the total cost of the contracts for each contractor for (i) the past 12 months and (ii) 1991-92.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

	Consultancy Contracts awarded
Arthur Andersen	
Period	
3 March 1992 to 4 March 1993	None
1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992	None
Kleinwort Benson	
Period	
3 March 1992 to 4 March 1993	[1]1
1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992	None

[1](Post Office: Financial Advisers).

The value of the single contract awarded is commercially confidential.

The figures do not include contracts issued by executive agencies that have delegated authority to engage consultants.

ALTENER Programme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to increase the number and widen the range of industrial pilot schemes under the EC ALTENER programme.

Mr. Eggar: I chaired the Council of Energy Ministers on 30 November 1992 which discussed a proposal for a decision concerning the promotion of renewable energy sources in the Community—ALTENER programme. The UK presidency secured politcal agreement to this programme which will support a series of actions to promote the greater exploitation of renewable energy resources within the Community. The ALTENER programme is a "software" programme and makes no financial provision for the creation of industrial plant.

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Eggar: Detailed information on the conduct and award of individual contracts is not held centrally by my Department and collection of this information would incur disproportionate costs.

European Regional Assistance

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to increase the involvement of *(a)* employers' organisations, *(b)* trade unions and *(c)* local authorities in the implementation of European regional assistance programmes.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have no such plans at present. Any such arrangements will be subject to revised Council regulations which I expect to be adopted in the summer.

Coal Industry

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the state of the coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: We intend to set out the conclusions of the Government's coal review in a White Paper to be published shortly.

Departmental Library

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will obtain a copy of the document of which he has been given notice by the hon. Member for Cardiff, West for his departmental library.

Mr. Eggar: Yes.

Gas-fired Power Generation

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to announce a decision for granting Electricity Act 1989 consent for the proposed PowerGen Connah's Quay gas-fired power station; what consultations he has had on a time-delayed consent; what assessment he has made of the impact of such a consent on the proposed Hamilton Brothers gas-processing plant at Point of Ayr and the development of the gas fields off the north Wales coast and in Liverpool bay; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. Friend is reviewing the use of his consent powers under section 36 of the Electricty Act 1989 as part of the coal review and has made it clear that he proposes to defer decisions on outstanding applications for new power stations until after that review is completed. The Government are proposing to publish their White Paper shortly.

My right hon. Friend recognises the importance which local representatives and equipment suppliers attach to all the proposed Liverpool bay developments. I can assure the hon. Member that all relevant factors are being carefully considered.

Petroleum Engineering Directorate

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will publish the Ernst and Young report into the relocation of the petroleum engineering directorate to Aberdeen.

Mr. Eggar: The Government have today published in full the report by Ernst and Young on the arguments for and against relocating the professional geologists and engineers of the DTI's oil and gas division—formerly the petroleum engineering directorate—to Aberdeen. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library of the House.

While the report showed there was no clear case for moving all the DTI's petroleum engineering directorate —PED—to Aberdeen, it did raise some wider issues. Ernst and Young's comprehensive analysis led the Government to examine the case for improving the service the DTI offers those companies who choose to locate in Aberdeen. We can improve the service to those companies by providing multi-disciplinary teams in Aberdeen. I am pleased to announce that during the coming year the DTI will open an office in Aberdeen to provide key DTI services to that part of the oil and gas industry based there.

Initially, the office will consist of 60 people and provide services which until now have only been available from DTI headquarters. In particular the new office will take the nationwide lead in the issue of field development consents

and in considering abandonment programmes. It will also process development applications—annex Bs—from companies based in Aberdeen.

The office will be expanded to 80 staff over the next two years if, as expected, additional companies move essential functions to Aberdeen. All this will create a climate which should help the successful development of the oil supply and service companies located there.

The setting up of the new office is an acknowledgement of the importance of Aberdeen as an established centre for both the United Kingdom and international oil and gas industry and of Aberdeen's potential for future growth.

Industrial Innovation

Mr. Rowe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on responsibility for encouraging industrial innovation and technology transfer.

Mr. Heseltine: In the context of the policies emerging from the forthcoming White Paper on science and technology, the Government will review the scope for transferring responsibility for a range of schemes for encouraging industrial innovation and technology transfer in Scotland and Wales from the Department of Trade and Industry to the Scottish and Welsh Offices respectively. The object of the review will be to bring about transfer of responsibility wherever practicable.

Offshore Oil and Gas

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which consultees agreed to the indicative conditions to be imposed on operators in blocks 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19, 104/21, 103/1, 103/2 and 103/3.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* All our consultees, such as other Government Departments and interested bodies, were given an opportunity to comment on the draft conditions to be attached to individual blocks. Consultees' comments have now been incorporated into relevant draft conditions.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the shortest distance in nautical miles between the northern extremity of blocks 104/16, 104/17 and 104/18 and *(a)* Burry inlet (grid ref. SS500970) and *(b)* Penclawdd.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The shortest distance between the northern extremity of blocks 104/16, 104/17, and 104/18 and grid ref. SS500970 is approximately 12 nautical miles. The shortest distance between the northern extremity of blocks 104/16, 104/17 and 104/18 and Penclawdd is approximately 13 nautical miles.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the shortest distance in nautical miles between the southern extremity of block 103/1 and 103/2 and *(a)* the Smalls and *(b)* Grassholm Island.

Mr. Eggar: *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The shortest distance between the southern extremity of blocks 103/1 and 103/2 and the smalls is approximately eight nautical miles. The shortest distance between the southern extremity of blocks 103/1 and 103/2 and Grassholm Island is approximately 10 nautical miles.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date his Department asked the Joint Nature Conservation Committee for its advice on blocks 103/1, 103/2, 103/3, 106/25, 106/29, 107/21, 104/16, 104/17, 104/18, 104/19, 104/21, 106/24, 106/27, 106/28, 103/19, 103/20, 103/24, 103/25, 103/39 and 103/30; and by what date it required a response.

Mr. Eggar: *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* Comments on the first three of these blocks were requested from the JNCC on 14 April 1992. No date was set for the JNCC to respond by, as a meeting was arranged to discuss its concerns. It responded on 1 June 1992. The remainder of the blocks were notified to JNCC on 5 and 18 May 1992. The JNCC responded on 20 June 1992. At all times we kept the JNCC fully informed of our timetable for announcements.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the shortest distance in nautical miles between the northern extremity of blocks 104/16, 104/17, 104/18 and 104/19 and *(a)* the nearest point to each block on the Welsh coastline and *(b)* the north coast of Lundy Island.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The shortest distance between the northern extremities of blocks 104/16, 104/17, 104/18 and 104/19 and the nearest points on the Welsh coast are approximately six, eight, six and two nautical miles respectively. The shortest distance between the southern extremity of blocks 104/16, 104/17, 104/18 and 104/19 and the north coast of Lundy Island is approximately six nautical miles.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the shortest distance in nautical miles between *(a)* the southern extremity and *(b)* the eastern extremity of block 104/21 and Lundy Island.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The shortest distance between the south-eastern extremity of block 104/21 and the coast of Lundy Island is aproximately six nautical miles.

Deregulation

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the current members of his advisory panel on deregulation, together with the organisations from which they are seconded.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The current members of the advisory panel on deregulation are:

Sir Nigel Mobbs—Slough Estates plc
Martin Robeson—J. Sainsbury plc
Richard Ellis—TSB Bank Ltd.
John Hoare—J. B. Hoare and Co.
Alan Hudson—Business consultant
Stephen Moss—Grosvenor Securities Ltd.
Dan Wright—Fleming Thermodynamics Ltd.
Tim Brookes—In Shops plc
Lewis Goodman—Norwest Consultants

Members are appointed in an individual capacity and not as representatives of organisations.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the work of his advisory panel on deregulation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The advisory panel on deregulation provides valuable advice to

Ministers, both in my Department and in others, and to the deregulation unit which reports to me, on Government requirements and regulations which may be burdensome to businesses both large and small. The panel is able to offer a business perspective on the management and prioritisation of work on deregulation. Members of the panel provide business views on deregulation issues, whether these arise from the implementation of domestic policies or from EC requirements or from the enforcement of regulations by local authorities and others.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dogs

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee how many dogs, other than guide dogs, are authorised to be present during the working day in the Palace and its associated buildings.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee what steps are being taken to require keepers of dogs authorised to be present in the Palace and its outbuildings, other than guide dogs, to ensure that mess is not left on pavements, roads or grass around the Palace.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Administration Committee is not responsible for the control of dogs on pavements, roads or grass around the Palace of Westminster.

Waste Paper

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Chairman of the Works Committee what arrangements are made for the recycling of waste paper from offices of hon. Members and staff of the House.

Mr. Ray Powell: Waste paper is collected free of charge and recycled off site by a contractor. Collections of waste paper are made daily Monday to Saturday.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for the south Derbyshire VAT office *(a)* the number of new registrations, *(b)* the number of cancelled registrations and *(c)* the total number registered at year end, for the last three years for which data are available.

Sir John Cope: The local VAT office that covers South Derbyshire also covers Derby and parts of Leicestershire and Staffordshire. The number of VAT registrations in the last three years is as follows:

Year	*New Registrations*	*Cancelled Registrations*	*Total Registered*
1990	2,370	1,652	18,022
1991	1,869	2,475	17,542
1992	1,805	2,168	17,190

Textile Industry

Sir David Steel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to reduce the paperwork experienced by the textile industry resulting from the EC Intrastat classification.

Mr. Lamont: The completion of the single market has led to the removal of most border formalities on trade with the European Community. This has considerably reduced the burdens on businesses.

Under the new Intrastat system, three-quarters of United Kingdom businesses will have to provide only two statistics on their total trade on a quarterly basis. Larger traders will also benefit from the replacement of the previous documentation with a simpler statistical return which will have to be only provided monthly. The previous system required separate paperwork for each and every shipment of goods in the form of the single administrative document. This means that 10 million export forms will be eliminated each year, with net annual savings to United Kingdom exporters estimated to be £135 million.

The United Kingdom is required to use the EC combined nomenclature classification under Council regulation 3330/91. These classification codes are similar to those previously reported on the single administrative document except that they comprise only eight instead of nine digits.

The Prime Minister has recently announced a scrutiny review of European legislation to help ensure that unnecessary burdens are not placed on business when transposing Community legislation into national law. Furthermore, the Government will continue to press for policies which will further liberalise the European Community market, including breaking down any bureaucratic barriers.

Global Investment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what matters relating to global investment in the environment and progress made in meeting the financial commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development were discussed at the meeting hosted by him of G7 Finance Ministers on 27 February.

Mr. Nelson: None. The meeting focused primarily on the economic situation in G7 countries. However, the commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development are being actively pursued in a number of fora.

Corporation Tax Fraud

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the numbers and grades of staff employed to investigate and pursue corporate tax fraud; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Approximately 400 Inland Revenue staff units are engaged in the investigation of possible or actual corporate tax fraud. This work is carried out by all grades of inspector of taxes up to and including the rank of principal inspector.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax has been recovered in cases of corporate tax fraud in 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92; how many cases were involved each year, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: It is impossible to distinguish fraud cases, but the approximate amounts of tax recovered in cases of possible or actual fraudulent or negligent conduct by companies, and the numbers of cases, in the years 1989-90, 1991-92 were as follows:

	Cases	*Tax £ million*
1989-90	3,248	122
1990-91	3,410	128
1991-92	3,913	162

Public Bodies (Members' Remuneration)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the amounts, and the basis in each case, of remuneration from public funds of *(a)* local government councillors, *(b)* school chairmen and governors, *(c)* chairmen and directors of health authorities and trusts, *(d)* members of police authorities, *(e)* chairmen and members of British Rail and British Coal, *(f)* members of social security and employment boards, *(g)* magistrates and *(h)* the Health Advisory Service.

Mr. Portillo: Information in the form requested is not available except at disproportionate costs. Details of the remuneration paid to members of public boards and nationalised industries is in "Public Bodies 1992" published by HMSO, which is available from the Library. Local government councillors are expected to receive allowances and expenses determined under the Local Government (Members' Allowance) Regulations of around £52 million in 1992-93. School chairmen and governors receive no remuneration, but travel and subsistence allowances may be paid at the discretion of local education authorities. Lay magistrates are entitled to travel and subsistence expenses plus a financial loss allowance, while stipendiary magistrates receive an annual salary of £52,500. The cost of magistrates' salaries and allowances, including national insurance contributions, is expected to be £4·5 million in 1992-93.

LAUTRO

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to improve the effectiveness of the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation in securing compensation for customers of insurance companies who have been sold insurance policies by salesmen who have stolen the premiums.

Mr. Nelson: The effectiveness of the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation is primarily a matter for the Securities and Investments Board.

Mr. Viggers: To aks the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the conduct of the Life Assurance and Unit Trust Regulatory Organisation in securing compensation for customers of the Royal Life insurance company affected by the activities of the company's former employee, Mr. Kissane.

Mr. Nelson: I regulary receive representations on a wide range of matters relevant to the Financial Services Act. The conduct of individual cases is a matter for the regulatory bodies.

Travellers Charter

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how often Customs and Excise posts are supplied with copies of the travellers charter; which posts currently hold stocks of the charter available for travellers; and what is the level of such stocks held by each post.

Sir John Cope: The travellers charter was launched in January 1992. It is in two versions: poster notices, which are displayed in Customs examination areas for travellers at ports and airports, and leaflets. Twelve thousand copies of the poster and 160,000 copies of the leaflet were printed.

The leaflet can be obtained from Customs at ports and airports, from the 21 regional collections and from Customs headquarters.

Customs offices reorder copies of the leaflet when stocks fall low. It is not possible to assess easily what is the level of stocks held by each post, but centrally 46,000 leaflets remain stock.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Her Majesty's Customs and Excise officials will begin wearing name badges as detailed in the travellers charter; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The travellers charter was launched in January 1992 and Customs staff have worn name badges with effect from around that date. Exceptions are made where the particular nature of the officer's duty might render the wearing of a name badge unsafe.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the firms of consultants used by Customs and Excise as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise have used a number of consultants to assist in preparing the market testing programme, to support in-house bids, to advise market test managers and prepare specifications. The cost of this consultancy since November 1991 has been £245,000. The following consultants have been used.

Barony Consulting
BIS
Capita
Coopers and Lybrand
Ernst and Young
Erskine Consultancy
PA Consultancy
PE Consultancy
Pool Associates

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in Customs and Excise since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise have completed four market tests since November 1991. The tests covered typing services in the Leeds and east midland areas, Southend headquarters and the Department's stores branch. In all cases, the in-house bid was successful.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all those services or functions that have been

contracted out from the Customs and Excise since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise have completed four market tests since November 1991. An in-house bid was put forward in each case, and all four contracts have been awarded in-house.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff in the Customs and Excise are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost Customs and Excise since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: Customs and Excise have a team of six staff dedicated to market testing and have also used a number of outside consultants. The total expenditure on completed and ongoing market tests on these staff costs and consultancy fees since November 1991 has been £360,000. Headquarters staff and staff in areas which are being market tested are also engaged in this work, in addition to their normal duties.

Bank Notes

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further representations have been received about the size of print and colours of the new series of £5, £10 and £20 bank notes; what replies have been sent; what action he has taken; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lamont: The design and issue of Bank of England banknotes is the responsibility of the Bank. I am advised that about 800 letters have been received, commenting on various aspects of the design of the new series "E" notes. Replies have explained the Bank's objectives in designing and printing banknotes, which are to achieve an appropriate blend of security features, distinguishing characteristics and cost effectiveness.

The Bank announced on 15 February that, in response to public comment, changes are being made to the denomination numerals on the £5, £10 and £20 notes. The revised £5 note was issued on 1 March and the revised £10 and £20 notes are expected to be issued later this year.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been the total revenue from stamp duty upon the purchase of houses in each of the last 24 months for which figures are available; and what was the average stamp duty liability per transaction in each of those months.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information relates to all transactions of land and property, other than shares, liable to stamp duty and is given in the table. The figures include new leases. Part of the duty on such leases depends on the length of the lease and is not affected by changes in the stamp duty threshold. New leases therefore accounted for a much higher proportion of all transactions liable to stamp duty over the period 20 December 1991 to 19 August 1992 when the threshold was temporarily raised to £250,000. This affects the figures on average stamp duty per transaction.

Stamp duty on land and property

1991

	Receipts £ million	*Average duty per transaction* £
January	90·5	810
February	61·1	770
March	70·3	870
April	79·5	810
May	69·2	710
June	96·7	1,010
July	92·0	810
August	102·9	1,040
September	74·3	740
October	87·6	840
November	69·6	770
December	68·2	800
Year	961·9	830

1992

	Receipts £ million	*Average duty per transaction* £
January	48·4	1,010
February	20·2	1,190
March	19·2	1,140
April	24·0	1,510
May	18·5	1,310
June	17·0	1,140
July	18·9	1,150
August	19·2	1,070
September	28·1	940
October	51.8	950
November	45.3	770
December	58.3	880
Year	368·7	1,000

1993

	Receipts £ million	*Average duty per transaction* £
January	51·2	850

Notes:
1. Monthly figures for the financial year 1992-93 are provisional.
2. On average, receipts and the count of transactions in a given month relate to transactions occurring in the previous month because of time lags.

Capital Allowances

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the information he has concerning the impact upon capital investment by manufacturing industry of the changes in capital allowances which were announced in his autumn statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The aim of the enhanced capital allowances is to encourage businesses to bring forward investment in equipment and buildings. They formed part of a package intended to restore business confidence, which has been widely welcomed by industry. Whilst it is too early to see the effects on investment, recent surveys suggest that the package has contributed to the improvement in business confidence.

Training

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement detailing the current arrangements which operate in terms of tax rebates when individuals contribute towards training costs to enable them to improve their skills and qualifications; and if he will make it his policy to introduce measures to allow such costs in the future to be fully allowable for tax assessment purposes.

Mr. Dorrell: Individuals training towards national vocational qualifications or Scottish vocational qualifications at levels one to four are entitled to tax relief on the cost of their training. Tax relief is also available for costs incurred by employees on full-time, job-related training courses lasting at least four weeks during which the employer gives paid time off. Self-employed people will generally be able to claim a deduction as a business expense for costs on refreshing business skills or knowledge. I have noted my hon. Friend's suggestion for wider tax reliefs for training.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has any plans to meet representatives of the Engineering Employers Federation, the Confederation of British Industry of the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance to discuss ways in which his policies can more effectively encourage individuals to improve their qualifications or skills.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer meets regularly the director general of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss a variety of matters. He also meets representatives from the Engineering Employers Federation from time to time, but has no plans to do so in the immediate future, nor to meet representatives from the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance.

Profit-related Schemes

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish *(a)* the list of firms participating in registered profit-related schemes and *(b)* the number of employees in each firm.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* As information provided to the Inland Revenue about particular employers' profit-related pay schemes is confidential, I regret I cannot publish the details requested.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will estimate the number of people who would have an income tax liability in 1993-94 whose sole income was invalidity benefit if invalidity benefit were liable to tax in 1993-94; and what would be their average annual payment;

(2) how many recipients of invalidity benefit would be liable to tax if the benefit was taxed in 1993-94; and what would be their average annual tax payment;

(3) how much would be raised in 1993-94 by taxing invalidity benefit.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* Approximate estaimates are that the yield, at 1993-94 levels, from making invalidity benefit taxable would be about £450 million, assuming statutory indexation of income tax allowances and bands.

The estimated number of recipients who would have an income tax liability and the average increase in tax is shown in the table:

	Number of taxpayers with invalidity benefit liable to tax	*Average increase in tax with invalidity benefit liable to tax*
All recipients of invalidity benefit	[1]750,000	£600
Invalidity benefit recipients with no other income	80,000	£150

[1]Of which some 250,000 already have an income tax liability.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Theatre-in-Education

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent representations he has received regarding the funding of Theatre-in-Education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have received three letters on this subject, one of which involved Greenwich Young People's Theatre in the hon. Member's constituency. I understand that, in 1993-94, the London arts board will be spending more money on Theatre for Young People, which includes Theatre-in-Education, than the £236,000 it spent this year.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to view the Theatre-in-Education work of the Greenwich young people's theatre.

Mr. Brooke: I am considering the recent invitation I have received from the chairman of the Greenwich Young People's Theatre to see its work.

Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils

Mr. Coe: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement about ministerial responsibility for the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils.

Mr. Brooke: The Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils are currently constituted as sub-committees of the Arts Council of Great Britain, though, in practice, both have enjoyed a degree of autonomy. In consultation with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and in the context of the Government's commitment to re-examine the role of the Arts Council of Great Britain, we have concluded that the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils should be separately constituted. With the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, ministerial responsibility for them will be transferred to my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales. In future, the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils will become directly accountable to them.

I believe that this change will enable the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils to respond more effectively to the needs of the arts in Scotland and Wales. Arrangements will

be made to ensure that the national arts councils take a collective view on matters of common interest, such as touring.

To ensure an orderly transfer of functions I propose that the Scottish and Welsh Arts Councils should become autonomous with effect from 1 April 1994.

WALES

Pupils (Faith Allegiance)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give a breakdown by local education authority of the faith allegiance of pupils in maintained schools; and what percentage of pupils are not educated in the maintained sector.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Comprehensive information on the faith allegiance of pupils in maintained schools is not available centrally. The percentage of pupils who are not educated in the maintained school sector as at January 1992 is shown in the following table.

	Percent
Clwyd	3·4
Dyfed	1·6
Gwent	2·5
Gwynedd	3·2
Mid Glamorgan	0·8
Powys	3·3
South Glamorgan	4·8
West Glamorgan	1·3
Wales	2·5

Farming Forms

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy that all forms made available to the farming community in Wales are processed through the Welsh Office; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Forms for all agricultural schemes within my area of responsibility are issued by my Department or, occasionally, in the interests of economy and speed, jointly with other Agriculture Departments. The validation of completed forms is carried out by the Welsh Office. Some statistical surveys conducted by the Welsh Office may be processed by an agency in the interests of efficiency or in order to protect the confidentiality of farmers' data.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure that all forms used in connection with applications for agricultural subsidy and grant aid are published bilingually in the Welsh language as well as through the medium of English; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: It is my policy to make all such forms available in Welsh as well as English whenever it is reasonably practicable to do so.

School Music

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what initiatives he will take to enable schools to offer specialist instrumental or vocal music training;

(2) if he will make a statement concerning the impact of the new educational funding methods on school music;

(3) what is his policy concerning school music;

(4) what is his policy concerning music making by *(a)* school orchestras and *(b)* school choirs.

Sir Wyn Roberts: We attach great value to the music support services, both for their intrinsic worth and because of their potential to contribute to the delivery of music within the national curriculum and we are anxious to see them continue.

Under the present local management of schools arrangements, local education authorities may hold back and deploy substantial resources centrally in respect of schools which they maintain. We firmly believe that local authorities should delegate more money to schools. To this end, we have required them to delegate a minimum of 85 per cent. of their potential schools budget to schools by April 1993. This will ensure that schools control more of their budgets.

We have not, however, prescribed which services should be delegated and which should be retained centrally. These are primarily matters for individual authorities to consider in consultation with schools within their areas.

There is nothing under the LMS arrangements to prevent LEAs from continuing to provide services such as peripatetic music teaching, where the funding related to these services has been delegated to schools. It is open to LEAs to develop service agreements with their schools which will regulate the relationship between service providers and schools. Thus once budgets are delegated, schools would be invited to buy back the services they received previously funded directly by their LEA. It will, however, be for the schools themselves to decide whether or not the service is required and whether it is of good quality and provides value for money. Whether they wish to participate in an arrangement will, therefore, determine if that service is to be provided by the LEA.

All maintained schools are obliged to meet the national curriculum requirements in terms of music teaching. It is for schools themselves to determine whether they wish to offer, over and above the requirements of the national curriculum, specialist instrumental or vocal music training and whether to run school orchestras and choirs.

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to obtain more specialist teachers capable of developing specific playing and singing skills in high schools in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I am not aware of any difficulty in meeting the demand for qualified music teachers for secondary schools. All newly qualified teachers should have the skills required to deliver the national curriculum for music, which includes instrumental work and singing.

I am already providing substantial grant aid, £12 million in 1993-94, through the grants for education support and training programme, for LEA programmes aimed at assisting existing teachers to introduce the national curriculum subjects, including music. This should ensure that existing specialist teachers are capable of developing playing and singing skills.

Responsibility for the employment and deployment of individual specialist teachers rests with LEAs and schools which are well placed to decide upon and react to local needs.

Pupil-teacher Ratios

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about pupil-teacher ratios in *(a)* primary schools, *(b)* secondary schools and *(c)* all schools for each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The figures are as follows:

	January 1990	*January 1991*	*January 1992*
Primary	22·3	22·3	22·3
Secondary	15·3	15·4	15·6
All schools	18·1	18·2	18·2

I am satisfied that pupil to teacher ratios have remained generally stable over recent years.

Schools Fundraising

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the amount of money raised by parents for schools in the last two years for which he has information.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information about school fundraising activities is not held centrally.

Special Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many registered inspectors in the Office for Standards in Education operating in Wales have recent knowledge and experience of special education provision.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Matters in respect of the operation of the office of Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales (OHMCI) are for the chief inspector. However, I understand that the ongoing courses for training potential inspectors have included several persons with recent knowledge and experience of special education.

Key Stage 3 English

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many pupils of key stage 3 age were involved in the pilot tests conducted by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate for key stage 3 English on which the proposed tests for 1993 are based;

(2) how many pupils of key stage 3 age plus one year were involved in the pilot tests conducted by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate for key stage 3 English on which the proposed test for 1993 are based.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The University of Cambridge local examinations syndicate conducted pilot trialling of test material for this summer's end of key stage 3 tests for English with some 3,000 pupils, all in year 10, in November 1992 and again in 1993.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many individuals and organisations involved in education have indicated their support for the way in which key stage 3 English is being introduced.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Many individuals and organisations involved in education support the national curriculum requirements for key stage 3 English which have been progressively introduced in schools since 1990.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the outturn of additional gross capital expenditure of Welsh local authorities in the period from 12 November 1992 to 31 March 1993, arising from the sanction of a temporary relaxation of the rules on the use of capital receipts for debt redemption.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on outturn expenditure for 1992-93 will not be available for some months.

Nursery Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about future developments in the provision of nursery education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Nursery education is provided by local education authorities at their discretion.

Health Service Waiting Times Initiative

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairmen of the Welsh health authorities in relation to the completion of the waiting times initiative contract funding; what provision he has made for carrying over unspent funding for uncompleted contracts; what information he has received on completion of all contracts by the end of the financial year; what assessment he has made of compensatory reduction or postponement in other treatments to complete waiting times initiative performance targets; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The implementation of waiting times initiatives is dealt with at official level between the Welsh Office and purchasers of health care.

All waiting times initiative funding for 1992-93 has been allocated to the relevant health authorities and GP fund holders.

Purchasers are aware of the need to complete initiative work by the end of the financial year. A full evaluation of this year's initiative will be undertaken at the end of the financial year.

There is no reason to believe there has been any reduction, or postponement, of treatment as a result of the waiting times initiative.

Education Services

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received on indications of cuts in education services by local education authorities following Government announcements affecting local government finances for 1993-94.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received representations from Members of Parliament, members of the public and various bodies. The great majority have been from members of the public about South Glamorgan county council's proposals for budget reductions in its music and community education services.

Farm Business Survey

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what method he uses to extrapolate farm incomes in less-favoured areas in Wales as a whole from the samples in the farm business survey.

Mr. David Hunt *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* The sample contains proportionately more farms with large gross margins than [illegible]es Wales as a whole. This is done to reflect the importance of these farms in total farm output. To ensure accurate estimates of LFA incomes, the sample estimates for each farm type are weighted by the number of holdings in each category.

PRIME MINISTER

Public Bodies (Appointments)

Mr. John Evans: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the former hon. Members who have been appointed since June 1987 to bodies to which Government Ministers make appointments; and what are the emoluments, remuneration and salaries of the individuals concerned.

The Prime Minister: The information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the former hon. Members of the House who have been appointed to bodies to which Government Ministers make appointments together with the salaries, emoluments or honoraria paid to the former hon. Members concerned, since April 1992.

The Prime Minister: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

10 Downing Street (Catering)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister when catering for No. 10 Downing street was put out to contract; if this took place by public tender; how many tenders were received; and how long the contract will run.

The Prime Minister: There is no single contract for catering for 10 Downing street. Catering for official functions in 10 Downing street is usually arranged by the Government hospitality fund using outside contractors.

Inhumane Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Prime Minister if he will now make it his policy to arrange ratification of the 1977 additional protocols to the Geneva conventions and the 1981 inhumane weapons convention at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Prime Minister: We expect to reach decisions soon on ratification of both the additional protocols and the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 9 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

EDUCATION

Pupil-teacher Ratio

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about pupil-teacher ratios in *(a)* primary schools, *(b)* secondary schools and *(c)* all schools for each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Forth: Information on pupil-teacher ratios in maintained schools in England in 1990, 1991 and 1992 is shown in the table. The latest pupil-teacher ratios are all significantly lower than those recorded in 1979. Further information on this topic can be found in "Statistical Bulletin 1/93", copies of which are in the Library.

Pupil-teacher ratios—England
Position as at January each year

	"Within Schools"[1]		
	Primary	*Secondary*	*"Overall"*[2]
1992	22.21	15.83	17.44
1991	22.21	15.55	17.22
1990	21.98	15.26	16.94

[1] Includes only qualified teachers within schools.
[2] Includes all teachers employed by LEAs and self-governing state schools (GM).

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the pupil-teacher ratio in each education authority in England in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: Information on the pupil-teacher ratios in each local education authority in England in January 1992 was published in "Statistical Bulletin 1/93", copies of which are in the Library.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column 129, if he will list the local education authorities in which no grant-maintained schools have yet been approved, together with the party in control in each case.

Mr. Forth: The details requested are as follows:

LEA	*Political Control*
Barking	Labour
Barnsley	Labour
Bury	No overall control
Camden	Labour
City	Independent
Cleveland	Labour
Cornwall	No overall control
Coventry	Labour
Doncaster	Labour
Durham	Labour
East Sussex	Conservative
Enfield	Conservative
Gateshead	Labour
Greenwich	Labour
Hackney	Labour
Haringey	Labour
Harrow	No overall control
Isles of Scilly	Independent
Isle of Wight	Liberal Democrat
Islington	Labour
Knowsley	Labour

LEA	Political Control
Leeds	Labour
Manchester	Labour
Merton	Labour
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Labour
North Tyneside	Labour
Northumberland	Labour
North Yorkshire	No overall control
Oldham	Labour
Redbridge	Conservative
Richmond-upon-Thames	Liberal Democrat
Rotherham	Labour
St. Helens	Labour
Salford	Labour
Sefton	No overall control
South Tyneside	Labour
Stockport	No overall control
Suffolk	Conservative
Sunderland	Labour
Wakefield	Labour
Westminster	Conservative
West Sussex	Conservative
Wigan	Labour
Wirral	No overall control

Family Perspective and Life Cycle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) in which publication, speech or statement his Department has described how it takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department;

(2) if he will make a statement on how his Department takes account of the family perspective and the family life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department.

Mr. Forth: Families play a crucial part in their children's education and full account is taken of the implications for the family in the development of educational policies. Since 1980 the Government have been intent on widening parental choice and entrenching parental influence and control in maintained schools. Schools are now more accountable to parents than ever before. The parents charter and the White Paper "Choice and Diversity" (Cm 2021) make clear the ways in which the educational service should respond to parents' aspirations for their children's education.

Musical Instruments

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy that the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument free of charge should be incorporated in the national curriculum.

Mr. Forth: The statutory order for music in the national curriculum already requires that pupils in maintained schools between the ages of five and 14 should perform music and, as they progress, develop the skills needed to make use of a range of increasingly sophisticated instruments. Schools are not permitted to make a charge to parents for instrumental musical tuition within school hours where such tuition is provided to meet the requirements of the national curriculum.

Schools Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list details of funds expended per pupil in each local education authority in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is not yet available for 1991-92. The table gives the unit cost for nursery, primary and secondary pupils by local education authority for 1990-91, the latest year for which information on actual spending is available.

Notes to tables

1. Figures are derived from local education authorities' returns of their net institutional expenditure to the Department of the Environment and of their pupil numbers to the Department for Education.

2. Net institutional expenditure covers the direct costs in schools of salaries and wages, premises and certain supplies and services. It does not include the costs of school meals, home to school transport, LEA central administration, and financing costs of capital expenditure. Figures include unspent balances held by schools at the year end under local management of schools schemes.

1990-91 Unit cost per pupil

Local Education Authority	Unit cost per pupil 1990-91
City	1,950
Camden	2,000
Greenwich	n/a
Hackney	2,165
Hammersmith	2,225
Islington	1,995
Kensington	2,340
Lambeth	2,020
Lewisham	1,985
Southwark	2,015
Tower Hamlets	2,140
Wandsworth	2,085
Westminster	2,715
Barking	1,745
Barnet	1,725
Bexley	1,575
Brent	1,760
Bromley	1,710
Croydon	1,630
Ealing	1,950
Enfield	1,650
Haringey	2,085
Harrow	1,685
Havering	1,605
Hillingdon	1,785
Hounslow	1,695
Kingston/Thames	1,740
Merton	1,855
Newham	1,750
Redbridge	1,625
Richmond/Thames	1,665
Sutton	1,640
Waltham Forest	1,940
Birmingham	1,550
Coventry	1,625
Dudley	1,530
Sandwell	1,670
Solihull	1,495
Walsall	1,755
Wolverhampton	1,600
Knowsley	1,640
Liverpool	1,645
St. Helens	1,485
Sefton	1,495
Wirral	1,605
Bolton	1,490
Bury	1,395
Manchester	1,555
Oldham	1,585

Local Education Authority	Unit cost per pupil 1990-91
Rochdale	1,545
Salford	1,560
Stockport	1,555
Tameside	1,545
Trafford	1,480
Wigan	1,530
Barnsley	1,425
Doncaster	1,445
Rotherham	1,550
Sheffield	1,625
Bradford	1,560
Calderdale	1,645
Kirklees	1,510
Leeds	1,620
Wakefield	1,560
Gateshead	1,620
Newcastle/Tyne	1,665
North Tyneside	1,620
South Tyneside	1,570
Sunderland	1,480
Isles of Scilly	2,815
Avon	1,495
Bedfordshire	1,590
Berkshire	1,530
Buckinghamshire	1,530
Cambridgeshire	1,475
Cheshire	1,470
Cleveland	1,535
Cornwall	1,445
Cumbria	1,595
Derbyshire	1,630
Devon	1,520
Dorset	1,500
Durham	1,530
East Sussex	1,500
Essex	1,480
Gloucestershire	1,470
Hampshire	1,460
Herefordshire	1,520
Hertfordshire	1,665
Humberside	1,510
Isle of Wight	1,505
Kent	1,385
Lancashire	1,510
Leicestershire	1,620
Lincolnshire	1,420
Norfolk	1,520
North Yorkshire	1,545
Northants	1,435
Northumberland	1,585
Nottinghamshire	1,700
Oxfordshire	1,740
Shropshire	1,635
Somerset	1,485
Staffordshire	1,525
Suffolk	1,550
Surrey	1,550
Warwickshire	1,455
West Sussex	1,505
Wiltshire	1,505

Further Education Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the expenditure per head of population on further education for each local education authority in England in 1991-92; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Information on expenditure in 1991-92 by LEA's is not yet available. LEA expenditure on FE colleges includes expenditure on both further education and on some local authority provided higher education. It is not possible to disaggregate the FE spending from the HE spending at LEA level.

Class sizes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the target class size by age group recommended by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: The internal organisation of schools is a matter for head teachers and governors.

English Tests

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which body funds the publication of materials relating to KS3 SATS (English); and how much, in total, it will cost to publish all materials relating to KS3 SATS (English) and to implement these tests.

Mr. Forth: The School Examinations and Assessment Council funds the publication of material relating to the key stage 3 tests.

The total cost of producing and distributing the papers and support material for the key stage 3 tests in English this June is estimated at £1·5 million.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many individuals and organisations involved in education have indicated their support for the way in which key stage 3 English is being introduced.

Mr. Forth: There is very wide support for the national curriculum, including the assessment arrangements that are an essential part of it. There is evidence that its implementation is already improving standards in the teaching of English, but that there is room for still further improvement. That is why my right hon. Friend commissioned a review of the English order.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many pupils of key stage 3 age plus one year were involved in the pilot tests conducted by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate for key stage 3 age English on which the proposed test for 1993 are based.

(2) how many pupils of key stage 3 were involved in the pilot tests conducted by the University of Cambridge. Local Examinations Syndicate for key stage 3 English on which the proposed test for 1993 are based.

Mr. Forth: The University of Cambridge local examinations syndicate conducted pilot tests with some 3,000 pupils, all in year 10, in November 1992 and again in January this year.

School Leavers

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a table showing the destination of school leavers by region for each year since 1980.

Mr. Boswell: The table gives estimated details of the intended destinations of school leavers by region in England since 1980. These figures are published each year in the Department's annual publication "Statistics of Education School Examinations GCSE and GCE."

Intended destinations of school leavers from 1980 to 1991 (England)

Thousands

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*	*1987-88*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*
Northern												
Degree Courses	3·48	3·47	3·70	3·71	3·41	3·28	3·27	3·32	3·16	3·69	4·05	4·29
Teacher Training	0·13	0·20	0·18	0·11	0·25	0·29	0·13	0·16	0·34	0·23	0·36	0·36
Other FT education	4·48	6·57	7·44	6·32	6·81	7·28	6·91	7·69	6·86	7·60	7·82	8·60
Employment (Inc Other)	44·13	40·80	40·32	41·89	40·50	39·20	37·89	37·10	33·77	29·84	27·44	25·01
Total	52·23	51·03	51·64	52·03	50·97	50·06	48·19	48·27	44·13	41·36	39·67	38·26
Yorks and Humberside												
Degree Courses	6·13	5·77	6·11	6·05	5·75	5·67	5·50	5·62	5·37	6·08	6·43	6·91
Teacher Training	0·30	0·38	0·55	0·43	0·36	0·39	0·36	0·21	0·39	0·38	0·42	0·43
Other FT education	9·22	11·61	13·10	13·34	12·75	12·70	13·09	12·70	12·92	14·15	13·81	15·93
Employment (Inc Other)	65·85	60·73	60·62	62·81	62·49	61·37	60·92	60·99	53·39	47·75	40·33	33·84
Total	81·51	78·50	80·38	82·63	81·35	80·12	79·87	79·51	72·07	68·37	61·00	57·11
North West												
Degree Courses	8·66	9·61	9·27	8·92	8·27	7·85	8·02	8·31	8·73	8·96	10·15	10·72
Teacher Training	0·38	0·30	0·47	0·41	0·50	0·41	0·38	0·32	0·42	0·36	0·41	0·43
Other FT education	15·31	18·71	19·87	20·20	21·39	21·47	21·32	22·33	19·63	20·13	19·48	22·27
Employmment (Inc Other)	86·00	80·00	79·67	80·19	77·89	75·46	74·65	73·01	63·99	56·97	51·15	42·85
Total	110·35	108·62	109·29	109·72	108·05	105·20	104·37	103·97	92·77	86·41	81·19	76·26
East Midlands												
Degree Courses	4·27	4·90	4·70	4·17	3·97	4·43	4·06	4·41	4·87	4·46	5·68	5·39
Teacher Training	0·23	0·35	0·25	0·23	0·34	0·26	0·19	0·18	0·20	0·38	0·36	0·39
Other FT education	9·56	11·15	12·60	12·29	12·06	12·14	12·42	12·60	12·13	10·96	11·73	14·54
Employment (Inc Other)	48·00	44·70	44·32	47·23	46·80	47·40	44·38	44·38	39·62	35·66	31·73	24·44
Total	62·05	61·10	61·87	63·92	63·17	64·23	61·05	61·57	56·82	51·46	49·48	44·77
West Midlands												
Degree Courses	5·76	6·02	6·39	5·81	6·20	5·93	6·01	5·98	6·80	7·03	7·65	8·59
Teacher Training	0·23	0·43	0·45	0·33	0·27	0·33	0·37	0·22	0·40	0·48	0·39	0·59
Other FT education	13·18	17·00	19·08	19·19	18·68	18·07	18·09	18·18	17·48	17·42	16·75	20·38
Employment (Inc Other)	67·24	61·99	62·47	65·21	64·88	62·83	61·95	61·54	54·60	51·44	44·90	38·51
Total	86·41	85·44	88·38	90·54	90·03	87·16	86·41	85·92	79·29	76·37	69·69	68·07
East Anglia												
Degree Courses	1·95	1·83	2·01	1·92	1·70	1·76	1·83	1·72	1·95	2·30	2·36	2·30
Teacher Training	0·06	0·11	0·14	0·06	0·11	0·04	0·07	0·11	0·09	0·12	0·16	0·17
Other FT education	4·44	6·00	5·97	5·73	6·63	6·50	6·12	6·28	6·94	6·09	5·47	6·57
Employment (Inc Other)	21·44	20·41	20·93	21·25	20·92	21·12	21·13	20·82	19·53	18·69	16·64	12·76
Total	27·89	28·35	29·06	28·96	29·36	29·42	29·14	28·94	28·51	27·19	24·64	21·80
Greater London												
Degree Courses	7·10	6·81	6·80	6·85	6·05	6·57	6·64	5·74	6·19	6·21	7·72	9·04
Teacher Training	0·22	0·32	0·24	0·30	0·40	0·25	0·23	0·09	0·21	0·15	0·26	0·31
Other FT education	12·56	15·41	17·85	18·03	19·01	18·99	19·69	19·79	18·75	17·78	17·28	19·72
Employment (Inc Other)	79·27	71·94	72·10	72·66	68·55	64·98	60·28	57·76	50·52	44·08	41·16	34·04
Total	99·15	94·48	97·00	97·85	94·02	90·79	86·84	83·38	75·68	68·21	66·43	63·11
Other South East												
Degree Courses	13·81	15·08	15·75	15·18	15·61	14·36	13·38	13·46	14·54	15·29	18·92	20·44
Teacher Training	0·69	0·74	0·88	0·62	0·74	0·74	0·50	0·49	0·58	0·51	0·72	0·71
Other FT education	27·16	32·91	34·23	36·65	36·82	36·08	35·67	36·19	33·28	35·40	32·38	39·98
Employment (Inc Other)	121·53	110·49	112·94	117·04	113·35	109·40	106·35	106·81	94·60	86·76	76·94	59·49
Total	163·18	159·24	163·80	169·49	166·52	160·57	155·91	156·94	142·99	137·97	128·96	120·62
South West												
Degree Courses	5·37	5·47	5·53	5·11	5·04	4·89	5·11	4·96	5·02	5·77	6·71	6·78
Teacher Training	0·31	0·36	0·21	0·36	0·40	0·26	0·22	0·13	0·27	0·29	0·34	0·30

	1979-80	1980-81	1981-82	1982-83	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91
Other FT education	13·34	16·46	17·77	16·81	17·16	17·75	17·91	17·89	17·35	15·97	17·69	19·34
Employment (Inc Other)	48·93	44·92	46·21	48·12	46·74	45·77	43·17	44·51	41·06	38·35	32·32	25·45
Total	67·96	67·20	69·72	70·40	69·34	68·67	66·42	67·49	63·70	60·38	57·06	51·88
Total England												
Degree Courses	56·53	58·97	60·25	57·70	56·02	54·73	53·81	53·53	56·63	59·80	69·67	74·46
Teacher Training	2·57	3·18	3·37	2·86	3·37	2·97	2·45	1·90	2·91	2·90	3·42	3·69
Other FT education	109·24	135·82	147·92	148·56	151·31	150·98	151·22	153·65	145·34	145·50	142·41	167·33
Employment (Inc Other)	582·38	535·98	539·60	556·40	542·12	527·53	510·72	506·91	451·09	409·52	362·61	296·39
Total	750·73	733·96	751·13	765·52	752·82	736·21	718·21	715·99	655·96	617·71	578·11	541·87

Financial Cuts

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received in respect of cuts in education services by local education authorities following Government announcements affecting local government finances for 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received a number of recent representations about local education authority spending plans.

Public Bodies

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list each of the non-departmental Government bodies and other bodies to which he makes appointments, with the names of all appointees and dates on which they were appointed; what is the selection procedure for appointments in each case; and whether any Minister in his Department interviews those being considered before appointment.

Mr. Boswell: The details requested are as follows. The selection of candidates for appointment to the Department's public bodies follows procedures recommended by the Cabinet Office in the "Guide on Public Appointments Procedures" published in September 1992. Ministers conduct interviews with candidates in those cases where they consider it to be appropriate.

Business and Technology Education Council
Members and Date of initial appointment
Mr. P. Rogers (Chairman)—1 January 1993
Mrs. G. Armitage—1 January 1993
Mr. B. Barker—1 January 1993
Mr. D. Betts—1 January 1993
Dr. J. Capey—1 January 1993
Mr. R. Davies—1 January 1993
Mrs. P. Haikin—1 January 1993
Mr. G. Hawkes—1 January 1993
Dr. P. Hunter—1 January 1993
Mr. M. Lickiss—1 January 1993
Mr. M. Neal—1 January 1993
Mr. K. Ratcliffe—1 January 1993
Mr. J. Spence—1 January 1993

Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges
Mr. J. Carter (Chairman)—4 April 1987
Mr. D. Avery—1 September 1992
Mr. R. Bailess—1 September 1992
Mr. M. Brackenbury—24 August 1987
Mrs. P. Collings—24 August 1987
Mrs. S. Greenfield—1 September 1992
Mr. D. Hatfield—11 November 1987
Mr. N. Holmes—24 August 1987
Mrs. A. Longley—1 January 1990
Rev. D. Peacock—1 January 1989
Dr. R. Rix—1 September 1992
Mrs. J. Shackleton—1 January 1990
Mr. B. Tanner—1 February 1983
Dr. P. Troughton—8 August 1985

Centre for Information on Language Teaching
Prof. M. Harris (Chairman)—25 September 1990
Mr. J. Beadle—7 September 1992
Mrs. M. Bedford—14 May 1990
Mr. J. Haycraft—2 October 1991
Mr. D. Jones—2 October 1991
Ms J. Little—7 September 1992
Mr. A. Marsden—14 May 1990
Ms M. Ryan—7 September 1992
Ms V. Stone—2 October 1991
Prof. G. Thomas—7 September 1992
Mr. J. Wight—14 May 1990

Council for National Academic Awards
Sir R. Rickett (Chairman)—6 April 1991
Prof. E. Abel—6 September 1991
Dr. J. Axford—6 September 1991
Mr. A. Barnes—6 September 1991
Mr. G. Brinsdon—6 September 1991
Prof. R. Brown—6 September 1991
Ms S. Browne—6 September 1991
Mr. K. Childerhouse—6 September 1991
Prof. D. Davies—6 September 1991
Mr. J. Davies—6 September 1991
Mr. J. Earls—6 September 1991
Dr. N. Elmore—6 September 1991
Mr. W. Eltis—6 September 1991
Dr. G. Fairtlough—6 September 1991
Prof. I. Fells—6 September 1991
Mr. M. Frazer—6 February 1986
Sir K. Green—6 September 1991
Sir G. Hills—6 September 1991
Mr. G. Kirk—6 September 1991
Prof. P. Lines—6 September 1991
Baroness MacFarlane—6 September 1991
Mr. A. Morris—6 September 1991
Mr. W. Nicol—6 September 1991
Lord Pearson—6 September 1991
Mr. G. Ross—6 September 1991
Miss J. Trotter—6 September 1991
Prof. D. Watson—6 September 1991

Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
Prof. Sir W. Taylor (Chairman)—1 January 1990
Prof. R. Alexander—1 January 1993
Mr. J. Burn—1 Janaury 1993
Mr. D. Cloake—1 January 1992
Mr. P. Deshpande—22 January 1990
Sir V. Duggan—16 February 1993
Prof. K. Durrands—1 January 1991
Dr. R. Evans—16 February 1993
Mrs. G. Firth—1 January 1992
Dr. M. Frazer—1 January 1993
Ms C. Hayman—1 January 1992
Mr. D. Keith—16 February 1993
Mr. A. Lenney—1 January 1992
Mr. D. Mortimer—1 January 1992
Prof. A. O'Hear—1 January 1993
Mr. A. Pellegrini—16 February 1993
Mr. A. Pelling—1 January 1990

Mrs. M. Pritchard—1 January 1991
Mr. R. Reeve—16 February 1993
Mr. R. Scarth—16 February 1993
Mrs. V. Stead—30 April 1990
Mr. M. Tims—1 January 1992
Mr. M. Turner—16 February 1993
Rev. Dr. K. Wilson—16 February 1993

Education Assets Board
Sir T. McDonald (Chairman)—1 August 1992
Mr. H. Hoare (Chief Executive)—1 August 1992
Mr. B. Arthur—1 August 1992
Mr. K. Bridge—1 August 1992
Ms K. Buckley—1 August 1992
Mr. H. Couch—1 August 1992
Mr. J. Edwards—1 August 1992
Mr. P. Lewis—1 August 1992
Mr. G. Locke—1 Agust 1992
Mr. A. Solomons—1 February 1992

Fulbright Commission
Dr. C. Booth—1 January 1992
Lord Butterworth—1 June 1988
Prof. M. Edwards—1 January 1989
Miss E. Hodkinson—1 June 1992
Sir G. Leigh—1 January 1991
Prof. C. Peckham—1 January 1987

Further Education Funding Council for England
Mr. R. Gunn (Chairman)—17 July 1992
Dr. W. Stubbs (Chief Executive)—17 July 1992
Mr. N. Bennett—17 July 1992
Mr. A. Cann—17 July 1992
Dr. J. Capey—17 July 1992
Mr. A. Close—17 July 1992
Mrs. M. Davey—17 July 1992
Mrs. P. Haikin—17 July 1992
Mrs. M. Hobrough—17 July 1992
Mr. C. Jonas—17 July 1992
Cllr. L. Lawrence—17 July 1992
Mr. M. Lickiss—17 July 1992
Mr. M. Rowarth—17 July 1992
Dr. A. Wright—17 July 1992

Further Education Staff College
Sir R. Harding (Chairman)—15 November 1991
Mr. J. Baker—24 February 1988
Mr. P. Darley—1 December 1990
Mr. M. Farmer—15 November 1990
Prof. W. Forster—15 November 1990
Mr. A. Fowler—15 November 1988
Dr. P. Gallagher—15 November 1989
Dr. J. Gorrie—15 November 1988
Cllr. H. Hobhouse—17 October 1989
Cllr. G. Jenkins—15 November 1991
Cllr. G. Lane—15 November 1989
Cllr. P. Perkins—15 November 1991
Ms C. Sherriff—15 November 1991
Cllr. S. Spence—15 November 1990
Mr. A. Taylor—15 November 1991
Mr. J. Turnbull—14 June 1990
Cllr. P. White—15 November 1988

Further Education Unit Board of Management
Mr. A. Ainsworth (Chairman)—1 May 1990
Mr. M. Cross—1 January 1992
Mr. K. Franklin—1 January 1992
Ms A. Limb—1 January 1992
Mr. E. Morgan—1 January 1992
Mr. M. Rowarth—1 January 1992
Mr. C. Rowland—1 March 1992
Ms J. Scribbins—1 March 1992
Mr. D. Short—1 January 1992
Mr. T. Melia—1 October 1992
Ms L. Purser—1 October 1992
Mr. N. Thomas—1 October 1992

Higher Education Funding Council for England
Sir Ron Dearing (Chairman)—6 May 1992
Prof. G. Davies (Chief Executive)—6 May 1992
Prof. C. Campbell—6 May 1992
Mr. M. Fallon—14 December 1992
Prof. B. Follett—6 May 1992
Mr. R. Gunn—6 May 1992
Prof. K. Khaw—6 May 1992
Sir I. Pearce—6 May 1992
Sir D. Phillips—6 May 1992
Prof. Sir J. Shaw—6 May 1992
Sir R. Scholey—6 May 1992
Dr. R. Telfer—6 May 1992
Miss J. Trotter—6 May 1992
Prof. D. Watson—6 May 1992

Inner London Staff Commission
Mr. G. Warren (Chairman)—7 November 1988
Mr. A. Capelin—14 December 1988
Mr. T. Hingston—14 December 1988

National Council for Educational Technology
Mr. J. Richards (Chairman)—1 September 1992
Dr. I. Birnbaum—1 April 1991
Dr. W. Bridge—1 April 1991
Dr. M. Garnett—1 April 1991
Prof. R. Gee—1 April 1991
Mr. B. Gibbens—1 April 1991
Mrs. J. Irvine—1 April 1991
Dr. D. Laurillard—28 September 1992
Mr. G. Law—1 April 1991
Mr. O. Lynch—1 April 1991
Ms U. Malik—28 September 1992
Mr. S. McNair—1 April 1991
Ms S. Menon—28 September 1992
Mr. K. Satchwell—28 September 1992
Mr. R. Scarth—28 September 1992
Mrs. B. Vanderstock—1 April 1991
Mr. J. Young—28 September 1992

National Curriculum Council
Mr. D. Pascall (Chairman)—19 August 1992
Mr. J. Burn—15 August 1992
Mrs. P. Cooper—15 August 1991
Mr. B. Hutchinson—15 August 1991
Mrs. A. Locke—15 August 1990
Mrs. B. Lofthouse—15 August 1991
Mr. G. Mackenzie—15 August 1991
Dr. J. Marks—15 August 1992
Mr. J. McIntosh—15 August 1990
Prof. D. Regan—15 August 1991
Prof. A. Smithers—15 August 1992
Dr. R. Vaughan—16 February 1992
Mr. A. Wates—15 August 1991
Mrs. J. Wisker—15 August 1992

National Youth Agency Management Committee
Mrs. J. Wisker (Chairman)—1 April 1991
Mr. N. Cross—1 April 1991
Ms A. Efunshile—1 September 1991
Mrs. S. Joiner—1 April 1991
Ms A. Murray—1 April 1991
Mr. T. Shields—1 April 1991
Mr. L. Spencer—1 April 1991

Polytechnics and Colleges funding council
Sir Ron Dearing (Chairman)—1 November 1991
Dr. William Stubbs (Chief Executive)—1 April 1989
Prof. S. Birley—1 April 1989
Mr. A. Brickwood—1 April 1989
Ms C. Frankl—1 April 1989
Mr. E. Hall—1 April 1989
Prof. F. Holliday—1 April 1989
Dr. P. Knight—1 April 1989
Dr. G. Leonard—1 April 1989
Mr. M. Richardson—1 April 1989
Mr. M. Salmon—1 April 1989
Dr. R. Smith—1 April 1989
Mr. R. Wendt—1 April 1989

Schools examination and assessment council
Lord Griffiths (Chairman)—16 August 1991
Mr. R. Atkinson—15 August 1990
Mr. J. Barnes—15 August 1991
Mrs. J. Cohen—26 April 1990
Dr. P. Evans—18 September 1991
Mr. A. George—16 August 1991
Mrs. J. Kowalski—15 August 1991

Dr. J. Marenbon—15 August 1992
Dr. J. Marks—15 August 1990
Mr. S. Nepaulsingh—15 August 1992
Miss G. Peele—24 April 1991
Mr. A. Pellegrini—15 August 1992
Lord Skidelsky—15 August 1992
Ms K. Tattersall—15 August 1992
Mr. P. Wood—15 August 1992

Teaching as a career unit
Mr. P. Merridale (Chairman)—1 April 1987
Mr. J. Dodds (Director)—1 October 1986
Mr. J. Hendy—1 April 1990
Dr. B. Kingston—1 April 1990
Cllr. P. Mullany—1 April 1990
Mr. I Slocombe—1 April 1987
Ms C. Whatford—1 April 1990
Mr. G. Williams—1 April 1987

University commissioners
Sir J. May (Chairman)—1 June 1989
Lord Butterworth—29 July 1988
Mr. A. Gregory—29 July 1988
Sir J. Munn—29 July 1988
Prof. Sir D. Williams—29 July 1988

Universities Funding Council
Sir Ron Dearing (Chairman)—1 November 1991
Prof. G. Davies (Chief Executive)—1 April 1991
Prof. J. Barron—1 November 1988
Prof. M. Bond—1 April 1991
Mrs. R. Chapman—1 November 1988
Prof. B. Follett—1 November 1988
Sir K. Green—1 November 1988
Prof. M. Hicks—1 November 1988
Prof. H. Newby—1 April 1991
Sir I. Pearce—4 February 1991
Sir C. Reece—1 November 1988
Prof. N. Rinsler—1 July 1991
Prof. J. Shaw—1 April 1991
Prof. H. Wood—1 November 1988

University of Exeter: Court of Governors
Mr. D. Vallis—1 August 1989
Mr. E. Cordell—1 August 1989

Loughborough University of Technology: Council
Prof. D. Wedderburn—1 August 1990

University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology: Court of Governors
Mr. B. Heron—1 January 1989
Mr. T. Parr—1 January 1989
Mr. H. Farley—1 June 1990
Mr. B. Goodall—1 January 1993

University of London: Governing bodies
Heythrop College
Sr. D. Bell—1 January 1989

Imperial College
Mr. N. Cossons—1 May 1989
Mr. A. Fraser—1 February 1990
Dr. A. Knight—1 February 1992
Mr. R. Margetts—1 February 1992

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine: Court of Governors
Dr. R. Maxwell—1 January 1993

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College: Council
Mrs. C. Handley—1 July 1990

St David's College Lampeter: Council
Dr. W. Skewis—1 May 1988

Nursery Education

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about future developments in the provision of nursery education.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to the second of my replies to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms. Lynne) on 19 February at col. *416*.

Schools (Fundraising)

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement about the amount of money raised by parents for schools in the last two years where figures are available.

Mr. Forth: Information on the amount of money raised by parents for schools is not collected centrally.

Education Inspectors

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many registered inspectors operating in the Office for Standards in Education have recent knowledge and experience of special education provision.

Mr. Forth: The registration of inspectors for the purpose of carrying out inspections under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 is a matter for Ofsted.

I have asked Professor Sutherland, the chief inspector, to write to the hon. Member.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Absent Parents

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much child support maintenance will be payable by an absent parent with one child aged under 11 years, the child living with a parent who has not got a partner and is receiving £10 child benefit, if *(a)* the absent parent has a net income of £300 per week before paying superannuation contributions of £50 net, or *(b)* the absent parent is a member of a non-contributory pension scheme provided by his employer and receives a wage of £250 net per week, assuming housing costs are identical in both cases.

Mr. Burt: In order to provide the calculation it has been assumed, in each case, that the parent with care is in receipt of income support, and the absent parent lives alone and has housing costs of £40 per week. The amount of child support maintenance payable will be £79.55 for *(a)* and £73.30 for *(b)*.

The figures given are estimates for a specific set of circumstances and would be different if the level of earnings, superannuation contributions or the absent parent's housing costs were different.

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the additional contribution required by the Child Support Agency for each £1 of additional income of an absent parent above the protected income level.

Mr. Burt: The assessed amount of maintenance an absent parent pays will increase by 90p for each £1 of

additional income received while he is subject to the protected income provisions. Otherwise a deduction rate of 50p in the pound applies to assessable income until the maintenance requirement is met. A lower deduction rate of 25p in the pound applies to the balance of any assessable income remaining after the maintenance requirement is met.

Pension Age

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many members of the Social Security Advisory Committee which produced "Options for Equality in State Pension Age: A Case for Equalising at 65", were pensioners or retired people.

Miss Widdecombe: Four.

National Insurance Contributions (Avoidance)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to take punitive action against companies which make bonus payments to staff in cocoa beans, gold bullion or other commodities to avoid national insurance contributions.

Miss Widdecombe: The question of avoidance is kept under careful review. Regulations were introduced in 1991, to extend national insurance liability to shares, unit trusts and other financial instruments. Further action to tighten the law may be taken at any time as and when it is necessary to do so.

From April 1993 employers may be liable to pay interest on any national insurance class 1 contributions which are not paid by the due date.

Pensioners

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give an estimate of the trend in pensioners' real income since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: Between 1979 and 1989 the total net average income of pensioner units[1] increased, in real terms, by 30 per cent. before housing costs are taken into account and by 37 per cent. after housing costs. Both single pensioners and pensioner couples enjoyed increases in their real net incomes of 29 per cent. before housing costs and 33 per cent. and 36 per cent. respectively after housing costs are taken into account.

Source: Family Expenditure Survey 1989.

Note:

[1] Pensioner units are defined as single people over state pension age and couples in which the husband is over state pension age.

Benefits Agency (Staff Transport)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the costs of the transport contract to carry his Department's staff from Leeds station to the Benefits Agency's head office at Quarry hill, Leeds.

Mr. Burt: The cost to the Benefits Agency is £424 a week.

Disability Payments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision he proposes in the period up to 31 March for those requiring assistance equivalent to that provided by the independent living fund up until 31 December 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The provision of domiciliary care for all disabled people is a matter for local authorities and for my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Health. However, as previously announced and subject to parliamentary approval, two new funds will come into existence on 1 April. The independent living (extension) fund will manage the existing ILF case load of some 21,000 disabled people and the independent living (1993) fund will, in co-operation with local authorities, provide extra cash help for some of the most severly disabled people.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what provision he is making for those of pensionable age who require assistance equivalent to that provided by the independent living fund up to 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The provision of domiciliary care for all disabled people, including those of pensionable age, is a matter for local authorities and for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what organisations representing the disabled will be invited to become trustees of the trust for the new independent living fund.

Mr. Scott: Mr. John Shepherd, an ex-financial director of Remploy, and Mr. Robin Wendt, secretary of the Association of County Councils, have been appointed as the first two trustees.

I am still considering further candidates for appointment as trustees of the independent living fund successor bodies. A full announcement will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for an ex-gratia payment towards telephone expenses arising from delays in the Benefits Agency dealing with disability allowance claims have been made; how many ex-gratia payments have been paid; what is the maximum and minimum ex-gratia payment paid; and how claimants are advised of the facility to claim an ex-gratia payment.

Mr. Scott: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Paddy Tipping, dated 8 March 1993.

Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking how many claims for an ex-gratia payment towards telephone expenses arising from delays in the Benefits Agency dealing with disability allowance claims have been made; how many ex-gratia payments have been made; what is the maximum and minimum ex-gratia payment paid; and how claimants are advised of the facility to claim an ex-gratia payment.

Up to 3 March 1993, 79 claims have been received for ex-gratia payments towards telephone expenses arising from delays in the Benefit Agency dealing with Disability Living Allowance claims. Forty-one such payments have been made and four requests have been refused. There are 34 claims presently being considered. The maximum ex-gratia payment made has been £116.24 and the minimum £4.33.

Customers are not individually advised about the facility to claim ex-gratia payments, but there is advice within the Benefits Agency Customer Charter which advises what to do "If things go wrong". If the customer feels this to be applicable, contact with the Customer Service Manager is advised. The Benefits Agency Customer Charter was distributed to Welfare Organisations, other organisations representing customer interests, and to staff of the Benefits Agency. It is readily available from Disability Benefits Centres and District Offices.

The DLAU has issued written instructions to its staff, detailing the procedures to be followed when a claim for an ex-gratia payment is received. These instructions were recently updated and circulated to staff. A reminder is to be issued to staff about the update in the near future.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the library.

EMPLOYMENT

Jobcentres

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list all those constituencies which do not have a jobcentre within their boundary.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. John Battle, dated 9 March 1993.

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about constituencies which do not have a Jobcentre within their boundary. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately the information you requested is not readily available, as the areas served by Jobcentres do not correspond with Parliamentary Constituencies. Therefore it will take some time to compile the details. However, I will reply fully to your question as soon as I receive the information.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Skills and Qualifications

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement giving the details of those policies which have been introduced by her Department in each of the last five years in order positively to encourage individuals to improve their skills and qualifications.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government have taken a number of significant steps in the last five years to encourage individuals to improve their skills and qualifications.

These steps include: introduction of youth training and youth credits; introduction of employment training and employment action which merge into training for work from 1 April 1993; continued rapid development of the system of national vocational qualifications and other measures to secure parity of esteem with academic qualifications; and introduction of training and enterprise councils.

Further details for each year can be found in the relevant departmental report.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to meet representatives of the Engineering Employers Federation, the Confederation of British Industry or the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance to discuss ways in which her policies can more effectively encourage individuals to improve their qualifications or skills.

Mr. McLoughlin: I will continue to hold frequent meetings with industry representatives to discuss policies relating to skills and qualifications, and the way individuals might make best use of them.

Industrial Relations Code

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she plans to introduce a new code of good industrial relations practice in place of the one that was withdrawn in June 1990.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no such plans.

Training

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make it her policy to encourage small and medium-sized employers to take on trainees by allowing them to offset the employment costs of those trainees against the employers' national insurance account; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government keep their policies to stimulate employers to train under constant review. They already make a substantial contribution to the training costs of employers of all sizes through youth training and employment training.

Employers can also generally deduct the cost of training employees when calculating business profits for income and corporation tax purposes.

Training (Wales)

Mr. Fishburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement about the responsibility for training in Wales.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government will take further steps towards greater policy and financial devolution to Wales in the field of training. In particular, the determination of future public expenditure provision for training programmes in Wales will, from next year, become a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

The establishment of a network of training and enterprise councils in Wales has put a sharper focus on the economic demands of local areas, and this has ensured that training programmes are better tailored to local needs. In view of this, and in view of the creation of an integrated training, education and enterprise department in the Welsh Office, the Government believe that there is now greater scope for the separate determination of training policy for Wales. Accordingly, responsibility for

determining training policy in Wales will be transferred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales as from 1 April 1994, within the framework of the overall strategic priorities, initiatives and policies developed by myself, in consultation with colleagues and collectively agreed.

ENVIRONMENT

Consultants

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many contracts for consultancies were awarded by his Department over *(a)* the last 12 months and *(b)* 1991-92.

Mr. Howard: My Department awarded 224 consultancy contracts in the financial year 1992-93—to the end of February—and 274 consultancy contracts in 1991-92.

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the contracts awarded by his Department to *(a)* Coopers and Lybrand management consultants, *(b)* Touche Ross management consultants, *(c)* Price Waterhouse management consultants, *(d)* Ernst and Young management consultants, *(e)* Chrichton Roberts Ltd, *(f)* KPMG management consultants and *(g)* Leopold Joseph management consultants, with the total cost of the contracts with each contractor, for (i) the past 12 months and (ii) 1991-92.

Mr. Howard: Coopers and Lybrand management consultants were awarded five contracts by my Department in 1991-92 and five to date in 1992-93. These were:

1991-92
Information Systems Division Study
Information Systems Division: Information Management Strategy Review
Business Analysis Studies of the Government Car Service and Internal Delivery Service
Property Holdings: Review of Special Services Group Security Furniture, Procedures and Systems
Works Bill Paying System and Invoicing
The total cost of these contracts was £1,593,000

1992-93
Review of Local Authority Recycling Plans
Information Systems Division Study Implementation
Implementation of Recommendations from Studies of the Government Car Service and Internal Delivery Service
Property Services Businesses: Finance Support, Contract Costing and New Payments Arrangements
Landfill Costs and Prices: Correcting Possible Market Distortions
The total cost of these contracts was £1,035,362.

Touche-Ross Management Consultants were awarded five contracts by my Department in 1991-92 and two to date in 1992-93. These were:

1991-92
Framework for a system of Recycling Credits
Information Systems Division: Information Management Consultancy
Planning Inspectorate: Accountancy Consultancy
The Links between MINIS, Line Management Systems and Job-Descriptions.
Environment Policy Analysis
The total cost of these contracts was £121,940

1992-93
Registry Services: Advice to the Department of the Environment In-House Bid Team
HMIP Financial Management Review
The total cost of these contracts was £80,500

Price Waterhouse Management Consultants were awarded four contracts by my Department in 1991-92 and two to date in 1992-93. These were:

1991-92
Resource Implications of Sections 149-151 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (Dog-Control)
The Hulme Study
Empirical Study into Costs of Local Authority Housing Management
Training Package on Accounting Software
The total cost of these contracts was £191,249

1992-93
Review of Rural Development Commission Business Advisory Services
Recruitment of Head of DOE Accounting Services
The total cost of these contracts was £40,500

Ernst and Young Management Consultants were awarded four contracts by my Department in 1991-92 and three to date in 1992-93. These were:

1991-92
Planning Frameworks Call-Off Contract
1991 Population Census
Local Authority Statistics: Initial Options Study
Housing Revenue Account: Subsidy Payment System
The total cost of these contracts was £180,402

1992-93
New Computer System Operational Requirement
Property Services Businesses Special Services Group Business Analysis
Review of PSA Projects: Completion of Balance Sheets
The total cost of these contracts was £133,549

KPMG Management Consultants were awarded eight contracts by my Department in 1991-92 and four to date in 1992-93. These were:

1991-92
Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust: Finance Advice
Waltham Forest Housing Action Trust: Structure and Organisation
Advice in relation to EC small combustion plants Directive
Cost Assessment of the Environmental Protection Act 1990
Royal Parks Division: Management System
Property Holdings: Accounting for Portfolio Management
Property Holdings Contract Costing System
Consultancy Assistance in relation to Part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990
The cost of these contracts was £1,993,888

1992-93
Relocation of DOE HQ Staff in London
Planning Inspectorate Executive Agency Independent Business Advisor
DOE Re-Location: Consultancy on Advanced Office Support System
Proposal for the Wirral Business Enterprise Centre
The cost of these contracts was £255,300

No contract has been awarded to Leopold Joseph Management Consultants or to Crichton Roberts Ltd. since 1 April 1991. All contract costs are exclusive of VAT.

United States (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters were discussed and what decisions taken during his recent visit to Washington and California to meet the new American Administration and others.

Mr. Howard: I visited Washington from 28 February to 2 March. I met Vice-President Gore, Interior Secretary Babbitt, EPA Administrator Bowner and several other members of the Administration and members of Congress. We discussed international environmental matters, including the attitude of the new administration to the

biodiversity convention, the climate change convention, UNEP, the Sustainable Development Commission and the global environment facility. We also discussed the administration's position on other environmental issues including energy taxes and endangered species. The exchanges were constructive and useful to both sides, but it was not the purpose of the meetings to take decisions.

I have not yet visited California. When I do go, one of my main objectives will be to study the Californian initiatives in seeking reductions in pollution through economic instruments, and in particular tradeable permits.

Disabled People (Council Tax)

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance is issued to local authorities on the criteria to be used in allowing a reduction in council tax bills for disabled people who require additional space in their property and on the medical evidence required.

Mr. Robin Squire: Guidance was included in paragraphs 34-42 of Council Tax Practice Note 2, and in a letter issued by my Department on 8 February 1993. I have placed copies of both documents in the Library of the House.

Government Offices

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of Government office accommodation in the SW1 postal district of London is now vacant.

Mr. Baldry: A total of 7·77 per cent. of the common user office estate in the SW1 postal district is now vacant. Of this, 5·46 per cent. is undergoing or about to undergo refurbishment. The remainder is awaiting allocation, including 0·83 per cent. of below ground level storage, or is scheduled for disposal.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Fabricant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many answers have been submitted by his Department in response to written parliamentary questions asked by the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) in the current Session of Parliament; what was the estimated cost to his Department; and what estimate has been made of the amount of paper and card used in preparing the answers.

Mr. Howard: My Department has answered 259 questions from the hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis) so far this session. I have no estimates of the cost to my Department of answering these questions as we do not routinely keep such records. However, I understand that the present guidelines suggest an advisory cost limit of £450 per question. My Department also does not keep records of how much paper and card are used in answering questions from hon. Members.

Home Improvement Grants

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to carry out his consultation exercise regarding mandatory home improvement grants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The consultation paper on the future of the house renovation grant system, announced recently by my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing and Planning on 13 January, at column *707*, will be issued in the spring.

Home Improvement Agencies

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *308*, (1) what has been the total allocation, for each local authority, by region, to home improvement agencies in England in 1991-92 and 1992-93;

(2) what was the total value of the bids for funding of home improvement agencies in England, in each local authority in 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Sir George Young: The information requested has been provided in table form and copies have been placed in the Library.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much rate or revenue support grant per head of population has been given in total to each of the London boroughs since 1980.

Mr. Robin Squire: The amount of rate or revenue support grant in total for each London borough for the period 1980-81 to 1993-94 inclusive divided by the average resident population over that period is as follows:

Average rate or revenue support grant per head for London boroughs since 1980-81

Local authority	*Grant per head (£)*
Camden	3,209
Greenwich	3,936
Hackney	7,083
Hammersmith and Fulham	5,431
Islington	5,424
Kensington and Chelsea	4,258
Lambeth	5,888
Lewisham	4,783
Southwark	5,162
Tower Hamlets	7,160
Wandsworth	4,627
Westminster	4,404
Barking and Dagenham	3,454
Barnet	2,627
Bexley	3,394
Brent	5,080
Bromley	2,638
Croydon	3,096
Ealing	4,144
Enfield	3,392
Haringey	5,847
Harrow	3,190
Havering	2,934
Hillingdon	2,017
Hounslow	2,777
Kingston-upon-Thames	2,651
Merton	3,226
Newham	6,735
Redbridge	3,455
Richmond-upon-Thames	2,008
Sutton	2,838
Waltham Forest	5,242

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the standard spending assessments for each of the local authorities in Greater Manchester for 1993-94;

(2) what is the level of revenue support grant per inhabitant for each of the local authorities in Greater Manchester for 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested for 1993-94 is as follows:

Local authority	*Standard spending assessment*		*Revenue Support Grant*
	£ million	*£ per head*	*£ per head*
Bolton	185·6	706	367
Bury	104·7	584	237
Manchester	408·4	951	622
Oldham	165·2	752	417
Rochdale	151·5	738	403
Salford	169·0	745	407
Stockport	172·5	594	234
Tameside	144·8	658	322
Trafford	142·1	654	293
Wigan	189·5	610	275

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list for each year from 1974 to date the standard spending assessment, or predecessor assessment, for Worcester city council and Wychavon district council, and the average standard spending assessment of the English district councils.

Mr. Robin Squire: The available information is as follows:

LA expenditure[1]

	Worcester City Council	Wychavon District Council	All English Shire Districts Average
	£000	£000	£000
1981-82	3,133	3,714	4,191
1982-83	3,843	4,083	4,726
1983-84	3,948	4,270	4,790
1984-85	4,041	4,535	4,897
1985-86	4,163	4,654	5,007
1986-87	4,562	4,338	4,924
1987-88	5,004	4,102	5,717
1988-89	5,048	4,264	6,191
1989-90	6,946	5,745	6,579
1990-91	7,717	6,013	7,736
1991-92	8,664	6,545	9,516
1992-93	9,155	7,310	10,172

[1] Defined as Total Expenditure for years 1982-83 to 1989-90 and Net Revenue Expenditure for years 1990-91 to 1992-93.

LA expenditure per head[1]

	Worcester City Council	Wychavon District Council	All English Shire Districts
	£	£	£
1981-82	41·3	38·9	43·2
1982-83	50·6	42·8	48·7
1983-84	51·9	44·5	49·2
1984-85	53·0	46·7	50·0
1985-86	54·6	47·4	50·9
1986-87	58·6	44·4	49·7
1987-88	62·7	41·4	57·4
1988-89	62·2	42·2	61·8
1989-90	84·6	56·7	65·4
1990-91	95·0	59·5	77·2
1991-92	105·5	64·6	94·5
1992-93	110·8	71·8	100·7

[1] Defined as Total Expenditure per head for years 1981-82 to 1989-90 and Net Revenue Expenditure per head for 1990-91 to 1992-93.

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total of Government grants given to each district council in the north-west for the last years for which figures are available.

Mr. Robin Squire: The available information has been placed in the Library of the House.

Radiation Leak, Sellafield

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what are the terms of reference for Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's inquiry into the recent radioactive leak at BNFL's Sellafield plant; (2) if he will publish, in respect of the recent radioactive leak at Sellafield *(a)* when the incident began, *(b)* when the plant workers were informed, *(c)* when the emergency services were notified, *(d)* when Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the nuclear installations inspectorate were informed, *(e)* when his Department was notified, *(f)* when the accident was announced to the public and *(g)* how and when the leak stopped; (3) what assessment he has made of BNFL's report that no danger to the public arose during the recent radioactive leak at the Sellafield plant; (4) what measures he intends to take following the recent discharge to ensure that British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. will not exceed its future radioactive waste discharge authorisations.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he was informed by BNFL of the radioactive leak that occurred at Sellafield on 13 February; how many mega becquerels were released; and what substances were involved; (2) if he will make a statement on the leak of radiation from the Magnox reprocessing plant at Sellafield that occurred on 13 February.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department was informed of the leak of radioactive iodine-129 from the B6 chimney at Sellafield on 13 February; and what estimate he has of the risks posed thereby to *(a)* the British Nuclear Fuels work force and *(b)* the local population.

Mr. David Maclean *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* BNFL informed HMIP of increased discharges of alpha activity from the B204 stack at 16.00 hours on 12 February and of increased discharges of iodine 129 from the B6 cell vent line at 16.00 hours on 24 February.

Investigations into both these incidents at the Sellafield site are currently being undertaken jointly by the nuclear installations inspectorate, Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to establish the cause and whether a breach of any operating license or discharge authorisation has occurred.

Between 10 and 12 February releases of alpha activity from B204 were calculated to be approximately 350 megabecquerels (MBq). These discharges have now fallen to 5 MBq per day. The current annual discharge limit for alpha activity from the schedule 1 stacks (including B204) is 4,300 MBq.

In the week ending 13 February 1993 BNFL discharged 3,000 MBq of Iodine 129 via the B6 stack. Discharges for the following week had fallen to 2,500 MBq and by week ending 27 February to 1,000 MBq. The current annual discharge limit for Iodine 129 from the schedule 2 stacks (including the B6 stack) is 41,000 MBq.

Assessments of the radiological impact of these incidents will be reported to the House by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. HMIP expects to submit its report into the B204 incident by the end of March.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health and Social Services Board

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing for the Western health and social services board the number of employees defined as *(a)* Roman Catholic, *(b)* Protestant and *(c)* others, who were educated in (i) Northern Ireland, (ii) the Irish Republic, (iii) Great Britain (iv) elsewhere.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the total number of employees of the Western health and social services board, including home helps, defined as *(a)* Roman Catholic, *(b)* Protestant and *(c)* others, together with available information as to whether they were educated within or outside Northern Ireland is as follows:

Community Background	*Number*	*Educated inside Northern Ireland*	*Educated outside Northern Ireland*
Protestant	2,817	2,817	—
Roman Catholic	4,515	4,515	—
Others[1]	1,135	0	1,037
Total	8,467	7,332	1,037

[1] Includes 98 staff in respect of whom the community background and place of education cannot be determined.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing for the Western health and social services board the number of *(a)* Roman Catholics, *(b)* Protestant and *(c)* others in each grade or category used by the board.

Mr. Hanley: Information on the number of employees in the Western health and social services board who are *(a)* Roman Catholic, *(b)* Protestant and *(c)* others in each grade or category used by the board could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, an analysis of total Western health and social services board employees by negotiating groups and religion is as follows.

	Protestant	*Roman Catholic*	*Not known*	*Outside NI*	*Total*
Admin and clerical	395	541	6	87	1,029
Maintenance	93	55	3	7	158
Ancillary and General	448	609	9	103	1,169
Nursing	776	1,747	19	457	2,999
Social Services	137	292	2	73	504
Professional and Technical	189	208	1	50	448
Medical and Dental	79	82	10	125	296
Ambulance	53	43	1	8	105
Home Helps	647	938	47	127	1,759

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *247*, when the health and social services boards in Northern Ireland began the practice of defining their employees as EC or non-EC nationals; which other quangos in Northern Ireland follow the same definitions; from what date each began the practice; how the employees of each such organisation were defined before the present practice began; and why the system was changed.

Mr. Mates: The health and social services boards in Northern Ireland began the practice of defining their employees as EC or non-EC in 1989 in response to fair employment legislation. The process of determining the nationality of employees prior to this was by a process of self-definition. The system was changed to prevent assumptions being made on the community background of employees on the basis of their nationality.

No other quangos in Northern Ireland follow the same definitions.

Training

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet representatives of the Engineering Employers Federation, the Confederation of British Industry, or the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance to discuss ways in which his policies can more effectively encourage individuals in Northern Ireland to improve their qualifications and skills.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Nicholas Winterton, dated 8 March 1993:

You have asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to meet representatives of the Engineering Employers Federation, the Confederation of British Industry or the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance to discuss ways in which his policies can more effectively encourage individuals in Northern Ireland to improve their qualifications and skills. As Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency the Secretary of State has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Secretary of State has no specific plans to meet the representatives of the groups you mention, although he spoke at a dinner organised by the Engineering Employers Federation on 8 February of this year.

However the Training and Employment Agency will continue to have dialogue with these and other employer representative bodies as part of its ongoing process to ensure that training programmes and policies more effectively encourage industries in Northern Ireland to improve their qualifications and skills and are relevant to the needs of the industry.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement giving the details of those policies which have been introduced by his Department in each of the last five years in order positively to encourage individuals in Northern Ireland to improve their skills and qualifications.

Mr. Atkins: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Training and Employment Agency under its chief executive, Mr. J. S. Crozier. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from J. S. Crozier to Mr. Nicholas Winterton, dated 8 March 1993:

You have asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement giving details of those policies which have been introduced by his Department in each of the last five years, in order positively to encourage individuals in Northern Ireland to improve their skills and qualifications.

As Chief Executive of the Training and Employment Agency (Northern Ireland) (T&EA) the Secretary of State has asked me to reply.

During each of the last five years, training policy has consistently been to equip individuals with the skills and competences required to help them secure employment and to provide employers with a skilled workforce.

During this period there have been a number of changes to the way in which training and employment programmes have been organised and delivered.

The most significant change has been the establishment of the Training and Employment Agency brought together in a single statutory body with responsibility for both employment and training services. The Agency came into existence in April 1990. It is an executive agency within the Department of Economic Development and it is advised by a Board comprised mainly of employers. The Agency administers both employment services and training services which it uses to encourage people to acquire relevant skills and qualifications.

As far as training is concerned, the Agency's activities are directed around two main areas of activity. First, it aims to encourage the training and development of people who are already employed especially in companies of significant potential for growth in the tradeable sector. Secondly, it works with the Department of Education to raise the levels of skills and qualifications amongst the unemployed and entrants to the labour market, with particular emphasis being given to the 16-19 age group.

Policies under both these two main areas of activity are implemented in close conjunction with Northern Ireland business, through the Agency's advisory board, through a number of bodies which represent the training needs and standards of particular sectors of industry, and through individual company contact. Targets have been set for the attainment of qualifications which embrace the CBI's "world class standards".

During the five year period a number of new initatives have been undertaken. In 1988, the Job Training Programme was introduced to provide training for the long term unemployed. In 1989 arrangements were introduced to the Action for Community Employment Scheme (this is a short term job creation scheme) whereby persons employed under that programme spend a minimum of 20 per cent. of their time on training. In 1990, new arrangements were introduced for funding the Youth Training Programme, to enhance the quality of the programme, and to emphasise in particular the attainment of qualifications. In 1992, the Agency's Manpower Training Scheme, under which assistance concerning training is given to businesses in the tradeable sector was reshaped to make it more relevant to modern business needs, in the form of the Company Development Programme.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the administrative cost of housing benefit was in 1990-91 and 1991-92; and what he expects the cost to be for 1992-93.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the rates collection agency of administering housing benefit was £6,004,792 in 1990-91, £6,092,335 in 1991-92 and is estimated at £6,396,890 for 1992-93.

Minority Rights

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will consider the entrenchment of individual and minority rights through a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland and supervision by the new CSCE high commissioner for minorities, with effective rights of intercession conferred upon the Republic's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* The Government are firmly committed to the protection of human rights in Northern Ireland and substantial protection is already in place. The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights exists to advise the Government on the adequacy and effectiveness of human rights provisions in Northern Ireland. Human rights is among those issues which may be raised by the Republic's Government in the intergovernmental conference. The question of possible further measures to enhance the protection of human rights was considered by the Northern Ireland political parties during last year's political talks. I hope that it will soon be possible to hold further talks to continue to consider what part the protection of human rights might play in any comprehensive settlement.

Potato Processing

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of all grants from public bodies or Government departments, including the Local Enterprise Development Unit, the Industrial Development Board and the Department of Agriculture, Northern Ireland, to companies involved in potato processing, for the past five years; and, for each company, if he will give details of the number of jobs promoted by public funding.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* During the past five years financial assistance totalling £4,075,089 has been offered by public bodies and Government to Northern Ireland companies involved in potato processing. A total of 281 jobs were promoted as a result of this assistance.

DEFENCE

Relocation

12. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to relocate his Ministry's civilian posts in Yorkshire.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Decisions which we have already announced will result in the transfer of around 1,000

civilian posts from Yorkshire. Other proposals would result in the further relocation of posts. However, there will continue to be a substantial Ministry of Defence presence in Yorkshire.

Trident

13. **Mr. Jonathan Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress of the Trident programme.

Mr. Aitken: The Trident programme continues to progress to time and within budget towards its in-service date of the mid-1990s.

25. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Government expect to reach a decision on how many strategic nuclear warheads will be deployed on Trident.

Mr. Aitken: The Government have made clear that our Trident submarines will enter service from the mid-1990s carrying no more than 128 warheads. The exact number to be deployed will be decided in the light of circumstances at the time.

NATO

14. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next intends to meet other NATO Defence Ministers to discuss NATO defence policy.

Mr. Rifkind: The next plenary meeting of my alliance colleagues is the defence planning committee and nuclear planning group in Brussels on 25 and 26 May, when I expect our discussions to cover a range of current alliance business.

Tactical Air-to-surface Missile

15. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future of TASM.

Mr. Rifkind: We continue to study a range of possible options for our long-term sub-strategic nuclear capability; as I recently assured the House, I will make an announcement on the outcome at the appropriate time. The WE177 free-fall bomb is expected to remain in service well into the first decade of the next century.

United Nations

16. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has held to improve the effectiveness of forces fighting under the United Nations flag.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: We aim to ensure that our forces maintain their customary high level of effectiveness in all their activities. Where appropriate, units and personnel serving with the United Nations receive additional training and briefing specific to the mission concerned.

Bosnia

17. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the RAF to participate in the proposed airdrop of humanitarian aid into Bosnia.

Mr. Rifkind: We have no plans to take part in airdrops of aid into Bosnia. The United Kingdom's military contribution to the humanitarian relief effort will continue to be made by participating in the airlift to Sarajevo and supporting land convoys.

Royal Navy

18. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what he expects the strength of the Royal Navy will be in 1994.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The strength of the Royal Navy will vary throughout 1994, as new ships enter service and others are paid off. A snapshot of the strength of the fleet on 1 April 1994 will be published, as usual, in the 1994 statement on the defence estimates.

Gordon Highlanders (Merger)

19. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further consideration there has been of the proposed merger between the Gordon Highlanders and the Queen's Own Highlanders.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the statement to the House by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 3 February, *Official Report*, columns 319-21.

RAF Chivenor

20. **Mr. Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of RAF Chivenor.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Department's annual process of recosting of the defence programme looks at all aspects and activities to ensure that resources are used to best effect to secure Britain's defence needs. Some adjustments to individual capabilities will be required to match the defence programme to resources. As the support programme is not exempt from this, I cannot give any firm guarantees about RAF Chivenor's future.

Nuclear Tests

21. **Mr. Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the effect on the United Kingdom's independent nuclear deterrent of a moratorium on nuclear weapons testing at the Nevada test site.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no implications for the Trident warhead programme, for which the tests have been completed. It remains our view that the minimum programme of testing is the best means of ensuring the continuing safety and credibility of our deterrent.

Aircraft Purchases

22. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last met the chairman of British Aerospace and other United Kingdom military aircraft manufacturers to discuss the cost of aircraft purchased from them by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Aitken: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State makes regular visits to many defence manufacturers to discuss a wide range of issues.

Yugoslavia

23. **Mr. Ancram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has held within NATO or within the WEU on the distinction between peacekeeping and peacemaking as part of their respective roles in the former republic of Yugoslavia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: NATO and WEU participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations in the former Yugoslavia are kept under constant review. The diplomatic efforts devoted to peacemaking are being undertaken by the United Nations itself and by the international conference on the former Yugoslavia.

Bosnia

24. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the volume of aid delivered to date by British troops in Bosnia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Up to Sunday 7 March, 310 UNHCR convoys have been escorted by the British battalion group delivering 23,108 metric tonnes of humanitarian aid.

Compulsory Service

26. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to introduce a period of compulsory uniformed service within the United Nations peacekeeping forces for all United Kingdom citizens between the age of 18 and 25 years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: None.

Market Testing

27. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about progress on market testing in the armed services.

Mr. Aitken: The market testing programme in my Department has been substantially expanded following the publication of the White Paper "Competing for Quality" in November 1991. The three services have been set challenging targets and progress is monitored by a steering group which I chair. A summary of our programme to September 1993 appeared in "The Citizen's Charter—First Report: 1992" (CM 2101. November 1992).

Procurement

28. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the level of procurement from British arms and equipment manufacturers in each of the last three years.

Mr. Aitken: I refer my hon. Friend to table 1.10 of "Defence Statistics", 1992 edition, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Figures for 1991-92 are not yet available; they will appear in the 1993 edition.

Energy Saving

Mr. Ashdown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the effect of the use of Chelec units in his Department at Bath on energy saving for his Department; what sum is being saved to the Exchequer by the use of the Chelec unit; and what proposals he has to adopt this unit in other of his Department's establishments.

Mr. Aitken: A Chelec heating control energy saver unit has been installed on a trial basis in one of our buildings in Bath. Evaluation of the device over the course of a complete heating season is still in progress. Wider use of this or similar devices will depend on the outcome of such evaluation exercises and on their being suitable for the type of heating installation involved. It is too early to say what savings might accrue or whether this unit will be adopted in other establishments or buildings.

D-Day

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to celebrate the 50th anniversary of D-Day in 1994.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: My Department will be responsible for organising the Government's participation in the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the D-Day landings. At present, our plans are at a very early stage but will include high-level representation and the participation of all three services. Further details will be announced in due course.

Redundancies

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service men have had redundancy notices cancelled following his oral statement of 3 February, *Official Report*, column 319; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The statement on 3 February was taken into account before phase 2 Army redundancy notices were issued on 25 February. No redundancy notices have been cancelled, but anyone may submit an appeal against selection by 31 March 1993.

Army Personnel Centre

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the statement of requirements relative to the proposal to site the integrated Army personnel centre outside London.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to appendix 1 to annex A of the consultative document, a copy of which was placed in the Library on 13 January.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Tayside, North, (Mr. Walker) on 4 March, *Official Report*, column 229, if the Roberts study team involved in the assessment of sites for the integrated Army personnel centre has visited the building in Stockport referred to in his answer.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: No, but other Ministry of Defence officials have done so.

Surface-to-Air Missile

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the progress of the medium surface-to-air missile programme.

Mr. Aitken: Work on the evaluation of MSAM tenders was completed last September and we are now assessing the options in the context of our overall defence requirements. No decision has yet been made.

Vulcan Bomber

Mr. Olner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) on 26 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *507*, if he has an updated estimate for the running costs of the Vulcan bomber in 1992-93.

Mr. Aitken: The full operating cost for the Vulcan during financial year 1992-93 will amount to approximately £260,000.

Upholder Submarines

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what discussions Her Majesty's Government have had with *(a)* the Canadian Government or *(b)* any other party about the sale or transfer of one or all of the four Upholder class submarines; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what disposal price he has placed on submarines in the Upholder class;

(3) what is his best estimate of the production cost of each of the four submarines of the Upholder class;

(4) what is his best estimate of the total cost of the design, development and production of the Upholder class of submarines;

(5) on what date each submarine in the Upholder class entered service or will enter service.

Mr. Aitken: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 15 February 1993, *Official Report*, columns *71-72*.

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many diesel-electric-powered conventional submarines are currently in service with the Royal Navy; and whether decisions have been taken about the future of each of them.

Mr. Aitken: Three submarines of the Oberon class, which on current plans is to be replaced by the Upholder class, remain in service, along with one Upholder boat. The position on the remaining Upholder class boats remains as set out in the answers given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), on 15 February, *Official Report*, columns *71-72*.

Submarines

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many serving naval officers are currently qualified to command submarines; and how many of these originally qualified as commanders of diesel-electric submarines.

Mr. Aitken: There are currently 135 serving naval officers who are qualified to command submarines. On successfully completing the submarine command course, officers are qualified to serve on both nuclear and diesel-electric submarines.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOODS

Processed Potato Products

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of imports of processed potato products during the past five years.

Mr. Curry: The information is as follows:

	Thousand tonnes raw equivalent
1987	393
1988	488
1989	543
1990	520
1991	556

Source: Her Majesty's Customs.

Pâté de Foie Gras

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 3 February, *Official Report*, column *73*, if he can now supply the figures for imports of pâté de foie gras for 1992.

Mr. Curry *[pursuant to his reply, 9 November 1992, c. 610]:* Provisional data from Her Majesty's Customs and Excise shows 28,704 kg. of fresh and chilled fatty livers of geese and ducks were imported in 1992. All imports were from France. Statistics on pâté de foie gras are collected separately under the heading of prepared or preserved duck or goose livers. Imports of prepared or preserved duck or goose livers for 1992 were 88,991 kg. from France, 22,307 kg. from Belgium and Luxembourg, and 30,427 kg. from Germany.

Live Animals (Transport)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what facilities his Department has at the port of Poole for veterinary checks; and if every live animal export consignment is given those checks;

(2) if health certificates covering live animal consignments give the total travelling time from market to destination; and what checks his Department makes to ensure that total travelling time under EC directives for animals in transit is not breached from market to European destination.

Mr. Soames: As I explained in my reply of 9 February at c. *553-54*, Community law does not permit systematic checks on livestock at the Community's internal frontiers. However at the port of Poole, state veterinary service staff are available to carry out checks on a random basis to ensure that animals are healthy and being transported in conditions that protect their welfare.

The Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 requires that a certificate detailing the origin and ownership accompany each consignment of animals. The certificate must also include details of their place of departure, place of destination and the date and time of departure of the consignment. For journeys exceeding 24 hours a journey plan is required showing the arrangements made for the animals to be rested, fed and watered, and, if necessary, unloaded and given accommodation appropriate to their species and the arrangement for feeding and watering in the event that the planned journey is changed or disrupted.

For journeys to other member states, local veterinary inspectors are required to certify the health of animals and their fitness to travel. These inspections may take place at a market where the market is being used as an assembly centre. Otherwise the inspections would take place either at the place of origin or where the journey commences.

Cod

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much cod has been landed by Russian vessels in United Kingdom ports since January.

Mr. Curry: The latest available figures show that 376 tonnes of cod were landed in United Kingdom ports from CIS vessels between 1 January and 10 February 1993.

Organic Food

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the main foods imported from Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands that are organically produced.

Mr. Curry: This information is not available since import statistics do not distinguish between the production methods of foodstuffs.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the value in pound sterling of the organic food imported from Denmark and Germany in the last available 12-month period.

Mr. Curry: These figures are not available since import statistics do not distinguish between the production methods for foodstuffs.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the grants or subsidies available to *(a)* Danish and *(b)* Dutch farmers and growers for the inspection, marketing and promotion of organically produced food.

Mr. Curry: I am seeking information and will write to my hon. Friend.

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on the acreage subsidy paid in Germany to organic farmers and growers.

Mr. Curry: I am seeking confirmation of the current arrangements and will write to my hon. Friend.

Mackerel

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all fishing vessels that have been boarded or called into port as a result of fishing activities in the south-west mackerel box; and if he will give details of any action taken in each case since January.

Mr. Curry: A total of 86 fishing vessels were inspected in the south-west mackerel box between 1 February and 4 March. Eight minor infringements were identified and warning letters have been issued to those concerned. Two further infringements are being pursued. It is not our practice to release details of the individual vessels involved.

Lambs (Mortality)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the average percentage mortality figure for upland lambs during the lambing season.

Mr. Curry: The average mortality rate for upland lambs—exluding losses at birth—is estimated at 15 per cent. Actual rates will however vary significantly depending upon a number of factors, including climate, age and nutritional status of the ewe, lamb birth weight and husbandry.

Strategic Food Stockpile

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future of the strategic food stockpile.

Mr. Gummer: Since world war II, the Government have maintained a strategic food stockpile to help feed the civil population during a period of recovery should there be a major military attack. In July 1991 I announced a phased reduction over five years to achieve a smaller, more flexible stockpile consisting principally of ready-to-eat foods rather than raw commodities. This orderly run-down is now well under way as is the disposal of remaining emergency feeding equipment announced at the same time.

Latest assessments of food supplies suggest that there are more than sufficient stocks to meet expected needs in the aftermath of any conceivable attack on the United Kingdom. In the light of recently developed systems for locating on farm, and wholesale and retail stocks I have concluded that a strategic food stockpile is no longer justified. I am therefore putting in hand the necessary arrangements to secure liquidation of the stockpile by March 1996.

We shall continue to maintain plans for the recovery of the food and agriculture industries in the aftermath of war and to plan for the distribution of available foodstuffs in times of crisis. Future plans will be reassessed in the light of evolving civil defence planning assumptions.

Livestock Farmers, Northern Ireland

Mr. Elletson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the incomes of livestock farmers in the severely disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Curry: Statistics of incomes of hill farmers in Northern Ireland are collected in the farm business survey which has been carried out for over 50 years. The methodology is well established and the results are published each year in "Farm Incomes in the United Kingdom".

Net farm income is a measure of income available to the farmer and spouse for their manual and managerial labour and return on tenant type capital. Net farm income recorded by the survey of livestock farms in the severely disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland was £4,000 in 1990-91 and £4,400 in 1991-92. Forecasts made for the autumn review and agreed with the farming unions indicate that this will increase to £6,800 in 1992-93.

In addition to incomes from farming many farmers will have income from other sources.

Cash income, which is the difference between receipts and expenditure, may give a better measure of the actual net income available to farmers in any year. This will generally be higher than net farm income as it does not include as costs such items as depreciation, notional payments for unpaid labour and, in the case of owner-occupied land, a notional rental value. Cash income for livestock farms in the SDA in Northern Ireland is

estimated as £10,400 in 1990-91, £9,700 in 1991-92 and is forecast to rise to £12,300 in 1992-93. These statistics of farm income are available in the Library of the House.

Cattle Registration

Mr. Peter Atkinson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on changes to the rules about the registration and recording of cattle.

Mr. Soames: Legislation comes into force today which requires owners or keepers of cattle to register that fact with their local animal health office. They will also have to record the deaths of any cattle in their herd books kept on the farm.

These changes are necessary to implement the EC directive (92/102) on the identification and registration of animals which was adopted on 27 November 1992. This will involve important changes affecting most of the livestock industry. Its objective is to set up a harmonised animal identification system to enable animals to be traced back to their farm of origin, for disease control purposes and for policing payments made under the common agricultural policy. My officials are discussing with industry organisations how these new requirements will be implemented so as to minimise the burden on the industry as a whole, including those who have charge of animals for only a short period, such as auctioneers and dealers.

The first changes affect only cattle. The directive requires that a national register of all holdings on which any cattle are kept must be established specifying the address of the holding, the name of keeper, and the holding number. As well as farms, this will cover all premises where the animals are kept, including slaughterhouses and markets, dealers, zoos and showgrounds. Animal health offices already have a record of known cattle herds, and will be contacting known herd owners to verify registration details. However, other owners or keepers of cattle will need to contact their local animal health office to supply them with their details.

Keepers will also be required to record in their herd books the deaths of any cattle, in addition to the information which they have to record under existing rules. To comply with these requirements an amendment to the Bovine Animals (Identification, Marking and Breeding Records) Order 1990 has been made and will come into effect today.

The directive requires ear tags for cattle to be coded to identify the country of birth. It has now been agreed that the code to be used for the United Kingdom should be the letters 'UK'.

The use of ear tags to identify all cattle, and this new format for tags, will become mandatory before the end of the year. Further announcements will be made later about the detailed arrangements. In the meantime farmers are advised to limit the purchase of ear tags, especially bulk purchases, to the quantities necessary to fulfil the existing rules until the new requirements have been announced. There will however be no requirement to re-tag animals which are already tagged when the rules change, so existing stocks of tags may continue to be used for the time being.

The directive also covers sheep, goats and pigs. The rules for these species are less detailed and do not come into force for some time. Further announcements will be made as implementation measures are developed.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 10 March 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In 1991-92 expenditure on official entertainment in the Lord Chancellor's Department was £20,894·90p. In the current financial year, expenditure to 31 January, the latest date to which figures are available, it was £16,460·25p.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Manchester Prison (Market Testing)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the revised closing date for tenders in respect of the market-testing exercise at HM prison Manchester.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: 13 April 1993.

Political Asylum

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people from Poland have applied for political asylum since April 1992; and of these, how many have been granted asylum.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Available information is given in the table.

Applications received for asylum in the United Kingdom by Polish nationals, excluding dependants, and decisions
Number of principal applicants

		Decisions[1]					
					Refusals		
	Applications received	*Total decisions*	*Recognised as refugee and granted asylum*	*Not recognised as refugee, but granted exceptional leave*	*Total refused*	*Refused asylum and exceptional leave after determination*	*Refused on safe third country grounds*[2]	*Refused under para 101 of Immigration rules*[3]
April 1992	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
May 1992	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
June 1992	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	1
July 1992	4	1	—	—	1	1	—	—
August 1992	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
September 1992	3	3	—	—	3	—	3	—
October 1992	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
November 1992	4	2	—	—	2	—	2	—
December 1992	63	6	—	—	6	1	4	1
January 1993	85	9	—	—	9	—	9	—
February	19	5	—	—	5	—	5	—

[1] Decisions do not necessarily relate to applications made in the same period.
[2] Refused on the grounds that the applicant had arrived from a safe third country.
[3] Refused for failure to provide evidence to support the asylum claim within a reasonable period, including failure to respond to two invitations to interview to establish identity.

Prosecutions and Convictions

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* prosecutions and *(b)* convictions have been made in each police authority area in respect of (i) the Football Spectators Act 1989 and (ii) the Aggravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992, respectively, since the Acts came into force.

Mr. Jack: Information collected centrally on the number of prosecutions, convictions and orders given under the Football Spectators Act 1989 for 1990 and 1991 is given in the table. 1992 data will not be available until autumn 1993.

Court proceedings data under the Agravated Vehicle-Taking Act 1992, which did not come into force until April 1992, will not be available until autumn 1993.

Number of orders made under Section 15(1) of the Football Spectators Act 1989 by police force area 1990 and 1991

Police Force Area	*Orders*
1990	
Derbyshire	17
Dorset	1
Merseyside	1
1991	
Merseyside	4

Number of defendants prosecuted and found guilty of offences under the Football Spectators Act 1989 by police force area 1990 and 1991

Offence	*Police force area*	*Prosecutions*	*Convictions*
1990 Nil return			
1991			
Failing to comply with the duty to report imposed by a restriction order [Section 16(4)]	Humberside	1	1
	Metropolitan Police District	1	1
Failing to comply with requirements necessary to give effect to restriction orders [Section 19(6)]	Avon and Somerset	1	1
	Cambridgeshire	1	—
	Derbyshire	3	3
	Kent	1	1
	Lancashire	1	1
	Suffolk	1	1
Making a false statement or making use of a false document in connection with an application for exemption from the duty to report [Section 20(10)]	Avon and Somerset	1	—

Metropolitan Police

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list, for each year of the last 10 years, the number of police officers in the Metropolitan police area per head of population and the actual numbers used in the calculation.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is as follows:

	Population	*Establishment*	*Ratio*
1982	7,329,000	26,615	1:275
1983	7,214,000	26,915	1:268
1984	7,200,000	27,115	1:266
1985	7,202,000	27,165	1:265
1986	7,241,000	27,515	1:263
1987	7,247,000	27,815	1:261
1988	7,237,000	28,115	1:257
1989	7,201,000	28,415	1:253
1990	7,223,000	28,423	1:254
1991	7,260,000	28,439	1:255
1992	7,284,000	28,680	1:254

Secure Units

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his statement to the House on 2 March, *Official Report*, column 139, what he estimates will be the total capital costs of the secure units; and how much will be available in the current financial year and in each of the next five years.

Mr. Jack: As my right hon. and learned Friend indicated in his statement on 2 March, at columns 139-42, we are now working up detailed plans for the introduction of a new secure training order for persistent juvenile offenders between the ages of 12 and 15. At this stage, it is not possible to provide detailed estimates of the extra capital provision likely to be required for this purpose.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: My Department's expenditure on official entertainment in the financial year 1991-92 was £28,094; and in the current financial year, to 28 February, is £16,387.

Cleveland Alternatives for Young People

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *609*, if he will give funding to revive the Cleveland Alternatives for Young People project.

Mr. Jack: I understand that the Cleveland Alternatives for Young People project, which originally received funding from the Department of Health, is now a part of the local authority's youth justice team and that its services continue to be offered by the local authority.

Andrew Ohene

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will now make a statement about the death of Andrew Ohene in Swaleside prison on 13 June 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: At the inquest into the death of Mr. Ohene, which concluded on 5 February 1993, the jury recorded the verdict that death was caused by "misadventure aggravated by lack of care". Following the inquest, the prison service operational director with responsibility for Swaleside prison established an inquiry into the circumstances of Mr. Ohene's death. The inquiry is being conducted by Mr. John Harrison, the governor of Canterbury prison, and by Dr. Roger Ralli, principal medical officer within the prison service's directorate of health care.

Police

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will provide by police authority for England details of the ratio of the standard spending assessment and the population served for the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the ratio of the approved establishment to the population served in each police authority area in England in 1991-92 and 1992-93, and proposed for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is shown in the table.

Force	Police: population ratio (officers per person)			SSA: Population ratio (£ per person)		
	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Avon and Somerset	464	464	464	38·73	44·71	46·45
Bedfordshire	478	454	454	37·88	47·03	49·59
Cambridgeshire	544	540	540	32·38	39·58	41·12
Cheshire	509	503	503	35·16	41·18	42·79
City of London	5	5	5	5,033·90	5,655·37	6,480·49
Cleveland	371	371	371	48·50	55·85	58·03
Cumbria	414	413	413	43·19	50·25	52·21
Derbyshire	515	508	508	34·34	40·81	42·40
Devon and Cornwall	525	516	516	34·08	40·14	41·61
Dorset	515	509	509	34·51	40·72	42·30
Durham	435	435	435	40·96	47·65	49·51
Essex	511	501	501	37·13	43·77	45·87
Gloucestershire	455	455	455	38·89	45·56	47·33
Greater Manchester	363	362	362	49·32	56·36	58·51
Hampshire	533	522	522	35·13	41·96	44·25
Hertfordshire	501	500	500	39·14	46·06	47·82
Humberside	432	430	430	41·32	48·23	50·10
Kent	504	491	491	37·32	44·44	47·06
Lancashire	437	436	436	41·09	47·53	49·38
Leicestershire	488	481	481	36·64	43·13	44·80
Lincolnshire	491	491	491	36·36	42·19	43·83
Merseyside	306	306	306	58·72	67·70	70·33
Norfolk	534	525	525	33·38	39·48	41·01
Northamptonshire	503	493	493	34·98	42·02	43·66
Northumbria	400	397	397	44·63	52·12	54·15
North Yorkshire	510	508	508	35·16	40·78	42·37
Nottinghamshire	433	433	433	41·55	47·85	49·71
South Yorkshire	429	426	426	41·75	48·61	50·50
Staffordshire	474	473	473	37·84	43·84	45·55
Suffolk	544	537	537	32·74	38·62	40·12
Surrey	460	459	459	43·29	51·08	52·72
Sussex	480	474	474	39·22	42·48	44·75
Thames Valley	529	517	517	35·94	43·19	45·92
Warwickshire	482	480	480	37·66	43·93	45·81
West Mercia	543	535	535	33·15	38·74	40·25
West Midlands	376	375	375	47·38	54·64	56·76
West Yorkshire	390	390	390	45·99	53·13	55·20
Wiltshire	516	487	487	36·72	46·07	48·28
Metropolitan	256	258	258	92·93	100·14	104·56

Notes:

1. The latest population information available from the OPCS is for mid-1991.
2. For consistency with the shire forces, the SSA information used for the metropolitan single-service authorities excludes the capital financing and other services components.

WALES

Syllabuses

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the local education authorities who have adopted new agreed syllabuses since 29 September 1988, stating for each such local education authority whether the syllabus is newly prepared or is an adopted syllabus of another local education authority; and in the latter case if he will give the name of that adopted syllabus and the date of preparation.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I understand the local education authorities for Clwyd, Dyfed, Powys and Gwent have adopted new agreed syllabuses since 29 September 1988 and that none of them is an agreed syllabus of another LEA. I further understand that Gwynedd LEA has completed a review of its agreed syllabus and that Mid Glamorgan, West Glamorgan and South Glamorgan LEAs are at present reviewing their agreed syllabuses.

Schools (Daily Worship)

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give for each local education authority *(a)* the number of determinations granted to schools by the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education under section 12 of the Education Reform Act 1988, *(b)* the total number of county and controlled schools and *(c)* the percentage of such schools which have been granted exemption from daily Christain worship; and if he will give the corresponding figures for Wales as a whole.

Sir Wyn Roberts: This information is not held centrally.

Development Agency (Merger)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has for the merger of the Welsh Development Agency and the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: None.

Tillery Valley Foods

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what authorisation was *(a)* sought and *(b)* granted for departmental officials from his NHS directorate to attend the opening of Tillery Valley Foods new factory on 1 March.

Mr. David Hunt: No specific authorisation was required for the visit, which was undertaken by the director, NHS Wales.

Regional Development Fund

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the total received for Wales from the European regional development fund in each year since 1987-88; and what are the expected receipts for each year until 1996-97.

Mr. David Hunt: Since 1987-88, the amounts allocated from the European regional development fund are given in the table:

	£ million
1987	57·8
1988	63·3
1989	38·8
1990	27·4
1991	89·0
[1]1992	54·9
[1]1993	61·9

[1] Figures quoted are based on an exchange rate of £1 = 1·435 ecu.

Negotiations are continuing over Wales' allocation for 1994-97.

National Technology Strategy

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to develop a national technology strategy for Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: I already have a policy which actively encourages the strengthening of the technology base in Wales. This includes maximising the use in Wales of Government support means such as SMART, SPUR, STRIDE and other technology transfer schemes.

In addition, other initiatives such as the creation of Imperial Park, the formation of the Welsh relay centre and the publication by the WDA of the "Welsh Academic Directory" are designed to assist.

Development Agency

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each year since 1987-88 *(a)* the estimated market value at 1993 prices of property owned by the Welsh Development Agency, *(b)* the amount raised by the sale of property, *(c)* the total floor area of property owned and *(d)* the total floor area of property sold; and if he will provide forecasts of the corresponding figures for years until 1996-97.

Mr. David Hunt: I have arranged for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Gentleman, and for a copy of his response to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much of the finance for the work of the Welsh Development Agency has come from European Community sources in each year since 1987-88; and how much is expected to come from European Community sources in each year to 1996-97.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures for the period 1987-88 to 1992-93 are set out in the table:

Finance from the European Community

	£
1987-88	502,166
1988-89	2,560,725
1989-90	1,759,046
1990-91	3,917,682
1991-92	1,231,505
[1]1992-93	804,252

[1] To 5 March 1993.

Note: Figures include loans from the European Coal and Steel Community for which the WDA acts as agents.

EC funding for future years will be dependent upon the number of successful bids made by the agency.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how much has been allocated to and how much has been spent of the Welsh Development Agency's technology growth fund budget, in each of the last four years;

(2) if he will list the projects which have been funded from the Welsh Development Agency's technology growth fund budget in each of the last three years; and what was the funding level granted to each project.

Mr. David Hunt: The Welsh Development Agency's technology growth fund—TGF—is supported from its investment, grant in aid budget which includes a number of other investments. TGF expenditure in each of the last three years and a forecast outturn for the current year is as follows:

Total WDA technology growth fund payments

	£
1989-90	540,000
1990-91	120,000
1991-92	92,500
1992-93	400,000

I am not able to provide details of support to individual companies as this may be commercially sensitive.

Organic Farming

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to improve investment in Welsh organic farming.

Mr. David Hunt: I am considering a new grant scheme to encourage organic methods of production on farms and holdings in Wales. A consultation paper will be issued shortly.

High Technology Training

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to improve the quality of training in high technology in Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: A rigorous quality standard is applied to high technology training under employment training in Wales. A comprehensive quality system, based on the

European quality award and developed by the department in collaboration with the Wales Quality Centre, is used by training and enterprise councils in contracting with their training providers.

Under the new training for work programme I expect all Welsh TECs to continue to offer quality training in high technology skills.

Lords Lieutenant

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his estimate of the total cost of services provided by local authorities and other public bodies in connection with the official duties of lords lieutenant in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: Personal expenses arising from the official duties of lords lieutenant in Wales are paid by the Welsh Office. Expenditure in 1992-93 is estimated to be £16,500. Information on the cost of services provided by local authorities and other public bodies is not held centrally.

RECHAR Programme

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the projects in Wales that have gained approval under the European Community's RECHAR programme to date and the amount of funding granted.

Mr. David Hunt: I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the budget for each training and enterprise council in Wales for 1992-93.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 10 November 1992, at column *723*.

Education (Special Needs)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to increase available resources to local education authorities in Wales to assist with promoting policies of integrating children with special educational needs in mainstream schools; and how much has been allocated to each local education authority for this specific purpose in each of the last five years.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Resources for local authorities are not hypothecated and it is for authorities to determine funding for integration in the light of local circumstances and priorities. For 1993-94, under the grants for education support and training—GEST—programme, the Welsh Office is making grant available to local education authorities to support expenditure of £223,000 on projects for the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream settings. The Department has also invited applications from county joint planning teams for pump priming funding under the mental handicap strategy for integration in education.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. David Hunt: There have been none.

Local Government

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many representations he received during the consultation period on the future of local government in Wales; how many of these representations urged him to abolish Montgomeryshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Since June 1991 I have received many tens of thousands of representations in the form of letters, petitions and other submissions including a small number who favoured unitary authority status for Powys.

Substance Advisory Committee

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will grant funding to the substance advisory committee to enable it to employ a full-time worker in the Llandrindod Wells area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This financial year the Welsh Office has allocated to Powys health authority over £131,000 from central funds for combating drugs misuse, to supplement the authority's own investment in this field of work. The location of the drugs misuse workers is a matter for the health authority.

Drugs Dependency

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many cases of drugs dependency have been recorded in Wales in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This information is not available in the form requested. Figures relating to the number of first admissions to mental illness hospitals for drugs-related diagnoses are published in "Mental Health Statistics for Wales". The latest information on the number of addicts in Wales notified by medical practitioners to the chief medical officer at the Home Office is published in "Statistics of Drug Addicts notified to the Home Office, UK 1991: Area tables". Copies of these publications are available in the Libraries of the House.

Further information is available from the Welsh drug misuse database, which was set up in April 1991. The database records anonymous information on individuals applying to voluntary/statutory drugs services of general practitioners in Wales with problems relating to the misuse of drugs. A total of 1,759 new cases of drugs abuse were recorded in 1992.

Carmel Woods

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding the future of Carmel woods in the Gwenlais valley; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My right hon. Friend has received representations from hon. Members, individuals and organisations. An appeal for the registration of a claimed

old mining permission in respect of land including the woods is currently before him. A public inquiry has been held and a decision will be reached as soon as possible after the inspector's report is received.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. David Hunt: The amounts spent by the Welsh Office on official hospitality were:

	Amount
1991-92	£35,982
[1]1992-93	£34,569

[1] 28 February 1993.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Nicaragua

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what quantities of aid by bilateral, United Kingdom and EC programmes have been given to Nicaragua in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following is the information.

Official development assistance (net) to Nicaragua 1982-1991

($ million)

	United Kingdom (bilateral)	*Other DAC donors (bilateral)*	*European Community*
1982	0·06	76·83	7·27
1983	0·10	72·85	6·85
1984	0·01	71·65	14·68
1985	0·15	67·08	12·65
1986	0·13	104·45	9·07
1987	—	111·11	14·29
1988	0·32	166·24	24·56
1989	0·10	182·70	19·66
1990	0·13	273·58	[1]n.a.
1991	0·36	[1]n.a.	[1]n.a.

[1] n.a.—not available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Equal Opportunities

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures he will implement to ensure that the equal opportunities practices established in the civil service will be continued in any areas where services are contracted out to private companies.

Mr. Waldegrave: Where services are contracted out to private companies, the Government do not intend to require particular employment policies and practices, and such requirements will not be included in tender documents. EC directives impose restrictions on the Government's ability to take account of non-commercial matters. Subject to these restrictions, departments and agencies may wish to give prospective contractors the opportunity to provide information on their employment policies and practices, including equal opportunities, that such contractors may believe is relevant to their ability to fulfil the contract for which they are bidding.

Citizens Charter

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what arrangements are in place for the modification of insurance agreements between public service providers and insurance companies, in order to underwrite the service commitments outlined in the Citizens Charter White Paper (July 1991, Cm 1599).

Mr. Waldegrave: No special arrangements have been established in relation to the commitments set out in the "Citizen's Charter", Cm 1599. Government Departments do not generally insure, as it is considered more cost effective to deal with claims as they arise.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The expenditure by my Department on official entertainment was £282,770 in 1991-92 and £52,567 in 1992-93 to date. The 1991-92 figure includes £234,126 directly attributable to the 1991 economic summit.

European Bioinformatics Institute

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made on the United Kingdom's bid to host the European Bioinformatics Institute; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am delighted to announce that the United Kingdom has been successful in its bid to host the European Bioinformatics Institute at Cambridge. This was agreed yesterday by the governing council of the European molecular biology laboratory. The EBI is expected to be fully operational within two years. Accommodation will be provided jointly by the Medical Research Council and the Wellcome Trust.

Winning this bid represents a significant boost for British science. Molecular biology is an exciting and important area of modern science, with great potential for industry, and the EBI will provide researchers with vital informatics support. Securing this facility for the United Kingdom underlines our commitment to international science and will reinforce our leading position in molecular biology in Europe and beyond.

TRANSPORT

Roadworks (Code of Practice)

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement about the issue on approval of codes of practice under parts III and IV of the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Three codes of practice have been prepared by the highway authorities and utilities committee, representing highway authorities and utilities

in Great Britain, and have been approved by the Secretaries of State for Transport, Scotland and Wales. They are the codes on:

Reinstatement, approved under Sections 31 and 130, dated June 1992, published September 1992.

Diversionary works, approved under Sections 84 and 143, dated June 1992, published October 1992.

Co-ordination and Co-operation, approved under Sections 56, 59, 60, 115, 118 and 119, dated November 1992, published February 1993.

The Secretaries of State for Transport, for Scotland and for Wales have issued a code of practice, dealing with safety at street works, under sections 6 and 124. This was published in February 1993.

In addition, the Secretaries of State have arranged for the publication of the code of practice on inspections prepared by the highway authorities and utilities committee and dated July 1992. The Secretaries of State commend the use of this code although they have no statutory power to approve it.

All of the codes have been the subject of extensive public consultation before approval, issue or commendation. All apply to the whole of Great Britain, and all are published by HMSO.

Copies of all the codes of practice have been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many night flights will be permitted at Heathrow and at Gatwick in the winter under his recent proposals, excluding aircraft which are at present exempt and assuming that airlines use the same mix of aircraft as in the past year.

Mr. Norris: At Heathrow the mix of traffic in the period 2330 to 0600 does not differ markedly between the seasons. Assuming airlines use the same mix of traffic as in the past year, the proposed winter quota of 5,000 for Heathrow would translate into about 2,000 movements by aircraft counting one or more under the proposed new system and there would be about 300 movements by zero-rated aircraft in addition to those currently exempt. The assumption that the mix of traffic at Gatwick at night in the winter season will remain unchanged is unlikely. The best estimate is that the proposed winter quota of 6,450 for Gatwick will translate into between 2,350 and 3,500 movements depending on the build-up between scheduled and chartered services. There would also be some movements by zero-rated aircraft in addition to those currently exempt.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport, excluding its agencies, spent £169,050 on official entertainment during 1991-92, and has spent £194,222 to date—5 March 1993—during 1992-93.

Red Routes

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria used by his Department for the calculation of spending on roads leading to red routes in Greater London; how much has been spent in Islington; and how much is further planned on the A1 red route in Islington.

Mr. Norris: The specific traffic management measures to be introduced on and adjacent to red routes will be determined in local plans to be prepared under the direction of the traffic director in accordance with his network plan.

Some £680,000 has been spent by the Department on approved works on roads adjacent to the A1 pilot red route in Islington. Apart from maintenance, there are no plans at present for further expenditure on the pilot scheme in Islington, but the traffic director will be reviewing the route in due course to ensure that it is operating in accordance with his network plan for red routes generally.

Speed Limits

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate has been made of the effect a drop in the national speed limit to 60 mph would have in a reduction in energy consumption.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have made no precise estimate of the effect on fuel consumption of such a reduction in speed limits. The calculation is a complex one as fuel consumption would be affected by a number of factors, particularly the level of compliance with the speed limit, the rate of acceleration and braking, and the transfer of traffic to roads which already have a speed limit of 60 mph or less. However, the Government are keeping speed limits under review for both safety and environmental reasons. Our strategy is set out in the Department's document "Killing Speed and Saving Lives".

Road Accidents (Children)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many children were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured on the roads in each police authority area in England in each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The table shows the number of children aged up to 15 killed and injured on the roads, by police authority area for 1990 and 1991.

Child casualties[1] by Police force area and severity: Great Britain 1990-1991

	Casualties					
	1990			*1991*		
	Killed	*Injured*	*Total*	*Killed*	*Injured*	*Total*
Metropolitan Police	30	6,627	6,657	34	5,913	5,947
Cumbria	5	392	397	6	326	332
Lancashire	11	1,415	1,426	5	1,332	1,337
Merseyside	9	1,726	1,735	14	1,617	1,631
Greater Manchester	17	3,177	3,194	28	2,883	2,911
Cheshire	12	735	747	3	672	675
Northumbria	19	1,244	1,263	10	1,199	1,209

	1990			1991		
	Killed	Injured	Total	Killed	Injured	Total
Durham	8	468	476	9	449	458
North Yorkshire	4	575	579	5	507	512
West Yorkshire	20	2,018	2,038	11	1,878	1,889
South Yorkshire	7	1,099	1,106	7	1,017	1,024
Humberside	6	888	894	11	794	805
Cleveland	8	581	589	4	588	592
West Midlands	20	2,444	2,464	22	2,279	2,301
Staffordshire	4	1,022	1,026	10	929	939
West Mercia	13	814	827	3	753	756
Warwickshire	3	381	384	3	304	307
Derbyshire	8	691	699	2	593	595
Nottinghamshire	9	1,006	1,015	13	986	999
Lincolnshire	7	458	465	8	433	441
Leicestershire	10	747	757	7	740	747
Northamptonshire	6	492	498	3	420	423
Cambridgeshire	5	580	585	7	491	498
Norfolk	6	670	676	6	612	618
Suffolk	2	417	419	4	437	441
Bedfordshire	2	452	454	6	437	443
Hertfordshire	3	618	621	4	492	496
Essex	19	1,177	1,196	7	1,036	1,043
Thames Valley	14	1,376	1,390	5	1,176	1,181
Hampshire	16	1,289	1,305	8	1,130	1,138
Surrey	2	675	677	3	546	549
Kent	9	1,054	1,063	16	1,111	1,127
Sussex	11	948	959	3	871	874
City of London	0	0	0	0	0	0
Devon and Cornwall	9	1,055	1,064	5	883	888
Avon and Somerset	4	769	773	7	737	744
Gloucestershire	4	300	304	4	279	283
Wiltshire	4	387	391	7	373	380
Dorset	4	454	458	5	372	377
TOTAL	350	41,221	41,571	315	37,595	37,910

[1] Aged 0-15.

West Coast Main Line

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of passenger trains using the core west coast main line are arriving within five minutes of their scheduled times for the latest available period.

Mr. Freeman: Under the passengers charter, punctuality on InterCity services is measured by the number of trains arriving at their destinations within 10 minutes of the advertised time. On this basis, the west coast main line's performance for the period ending 27 February was 89·2 per cent.

Twyford Down

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will order an inquiry into whether excessive force was used by private security guards to evict protesters from Twyford Down; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* No. Any allegations about the use of excessive force to remove trespassers from the Department's land at Twyford Down are for the police to investigate.

Motorways (Grey Boxes)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many sets of steps have been built on motorway verges to connect with grey boxes; what is the purpose of the boxes; what is the average cost of the construction of the steps; what is their expected annual usage; and amortised over 20 years what is the predicted average cost of such use.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* No central record is kept of the total number of sets of steps or their total usage. The steps are provided for safety reasons for when maintenance engineers carrying equipment need to gain access to the grey boxes mounted on embankments or at the bottom of slopes. Such access might be routine—about four to seven times a year per site—or for emergency repairs which might be during the day or night. The average cost of a set of steps is about £1,000. The grey boxes house electronic equipment for the motorway emergency telephones and matrix signals.

New Drivers

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy on the introduction of probationary plates for young or inexperienced drivers.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend is considering various options for reducing the high accident rate associated with young drivers. Probationary plates are just one of many possibilities. We hope to issue a consultation paper shortly.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which he has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if he will make a statement on his policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* As part of implementating the citizens charter, my Department has already undertaken a number of surveys of customers' attitudes and needs. Among other things, they have enabled the Department to adjust office "opening hours" more closely to what the public want. We do not apply a uniform rule, but we have a number of changes to provide a better service; for example the Driving Standards Agency now offers driving tests on Saturdays and summer evenings. We will continue to keep the position under review.

DEFENCE

Bosnia

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the casualties sustained by Her Majesty's armed forces' peacekeeping force stationed in Bosnia; and how they were sustained.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There have been two deaths, that of Lance Corporal Edwards during an exchange of small arms fire by the warring factions in Gorni Vakuf on 13 January 1993, and that of Lance Corporal Rocke in the early hours of Saturday 6 March, the circumstances surrounding which are currently being investigated. There have been a further 48 casualties whose injuries were sufficiently serious or incapacitating that medical evacuation was necessary. Most have been of a minor nature resulting from road traffic accidents but more serious were a shrapnel wound sustained during a mortar attack, a ruptured liver suffered while taking exercise and an acid burn and fractured collar bone sustained from separate road traffic accidents.

Gulf Patrols

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost at current prices of the Royal Navy Gulf patrols in each year since 1987; and what are his estimates for the next two financial years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The costs of individual fleet tasks could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Nuclear Test Sites, Australia

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet his Australian counterpart to discuss rehabilitation of the former United Kingdom nuclear test sites in Australia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Australian Minister for Primary Industries and Energy met my noble Friend, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces, in November 1991 to discuss the Australian request for a United Kingdom contribution towards the cost of further rehabilitation of the former United Kingdom nuclear weapon tests sites at Maralinga and Emu Field. We have no plans for further meetings, but there has been regular contact with the Australian authorities on this subject and we hope to respond to the Australian request shortly.

Belize

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many traffic accidents involving military personnel have occurred in Belize in each of the past seven years; what was the number of service men killed or injured in these accidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

On and off duty road traffic accidents involving British Forces Belize

	1986	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*[1]1992*
Number of accidents	13	6	26	33	22	50	[2]44
Number of injuries[3]	9	8	5	4	8	7	17
Number of deaths	0	0	0	1	0	0	6

[1] Figures for 1992 are provisional.
[2] Up to July 1992.
[3] Comprises only those injuries resulting in admission to hospital.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sums of money have been paid to the Government of Belize in each of the past 10 years for the payment of road repairs and maintenance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The Ministry of Defence does not make any payments to the Government of Belize in respect of road repairs and maintenance.

Road Accidents

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if it is the practice for boards of inquiry to investigate road traffic accidents occurring in other countries which involve armed forces personnel and vehicles and in which service men and women have suffered fatal or serious injuries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Road traffic accidents involving military personnel serving overseas are investigated by the service police in liaison with the local police authorities. The findings of the police investigation are submitted to command headquarters for consideration. A board of inquiry may subsequently be convened if the command authorities require an internal investigation additional to that of the police, but this is not normally considered necessary.

Welbeck College

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the examination results for Welbeck college, Nottinghamshire for the last two academic years.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information on A-level results is set out in the table.

Academic year	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Number of students	66	55
Overall pass rate (per cent.)	81	76
Average points per student in all examination subjects[1]	19.35	17.33

[1] Grade A=10 points, B=8, C=6, D=4 and E=2.

RAF Hospitals

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 February to the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), *Official Report*, column *740*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the review on which he based his decisions concerning RAF hospitals.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Gibraltar

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *255*, what estimate he has made of the costs of deploying personnel from the United Kingdom to undertake naval control of shipping tasks at Gibraltar in periods of tension or war, hitherto undertaken by Royal Naval Reserve personnel; what plans he has to close the maritime headquarters; what use it is intended to make of the accommodation at HMS Calpe; from whose budget the annual costs have hitherto been met; on whose budget the costs of the Territorial Army element of the Gibraltar Regiment are borne; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Naval control of shipping staff would only deploy to Gibraltar in the event of a major conflict. The extra costs of deploying an RNR officer would be approximately £160 per person travel costs, should a trooping flight be unavailable, and £1·55 per officer per day for mess accommodation at current prices. There are no plans to close the maritime headquarters. The accommodation at HMS Calpe will be used as a community centre by the staff of Commander British Forces Gibraltar and their families. The costs of pay, bounty and allowances for volunteer reservists at HMS Calpe fall to the top level budget of the Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command; all other costs fall to the higher level budget of the Commander British Forces Gibraltar within the top level budget of the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff as do the costs of the TA element of the Gibraltar Regiment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Agricultural Land (Building)

Mr. Cryer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual estimated yield if a 20 per cent. tax was imposed on the enhanced value of agricultural land sold for building development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that a reliable estimate could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Self-employment

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many individuals who claim self-employed status each year are subsequently found to be employed.

Mr. Dorrell: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to review the principles of contract of service and contract for services in distinguishing between employed and self-employed status.

Mr. Dorrell: The principles of contract of service and contract for services are matters of general law. The application of these principles to the question of employment status for tax purposes is kept under review.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what circumstances the Inland Revenue treats an individual with one source of income as self-employed.

Mr. Dorrell: Whether or not an individual is self-employed is a question of fact and law, and depends on the terms of the engagement concerned, rather than the number of sources of income.

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the criteria applied by the Inland Revenue in determining whether an individual is self-employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Guidelines to help an individual decide whether he or she is self-employed or an employee are set out in the Inland Revenue leaflet IR56/N139. These are summarised briefly in the table. But the criteria must be considered as a whole. Any one of them is unlikely to be sufficient in itself and the relative weight to be given to each may vary accordingly to the particular circumstances of the case.

Does the individual have a final say in how the business is run? Does the individual risk money in the business? And is the individual responsible for meeting losses as well as taking profits?

Does the individual have to do the work themselves, or can they hire someone to do the work (and pay them out of their own pocket)? Does someone else tell them what to do?

Does the individual provide major items of equipment necessary to do the job?

Does the individual have to work at the premises of the work provider?

Is the individual paid by the hour, week or month, or for a specific piece of work?

Family Perspective and Life Cycle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in which publication, speech or statement his Department has described how it takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department.

Sir John Cope: The "1993 Departmental Report for the Chancellor's Departments", Cm 2217, outlines the roles and objectives of the Treasury. The Chancellor's Budget statement and the "Financial Statement and Budget Report" outline developments in the economy, provide economic forecasts and set out the Budget proposals. The "Autumn Statement" and "Statistical Supplement to the Autumn Statement" set out public spending plans. The policies outlined in these various publications take account of implications for the family.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on how his Department takes account of the family perspective and the family life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department.

Sir John Cope: These issues are considered by the Treasury in the formulation and implementation of the Government's economic and financial policy.

Taxation

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes he proposes to the rules covering the claiming of expenses against tax in respect of a person opting for the payment of fees to a company rather than of a salary to himself.

Mr. Dorrell: I cannot comment on suggestions for tax changes at this time of year. But benefits in kind provided by a company to its directors or employees, and expenses paid on their behalf for which they could not obtain a tax deduction, are chargeable to tax on the individuals in the normal way.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Nelson: All services or functions in the Treasury that have been contracted out since November 1991 were either new services or functions, or had previously been contracted out. In all these cases, there was no in-house team to bid.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he *(a)* has taken and *(b)* proposes to take to reduce opportunity for tax avoidance by full-time employees through the payment of fees to private companies in lieu of salaries; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: I refer to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) on 5 March, at column *341*.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the number of companies which are being used as vehicles for tax avoidance purposes for individuals who have their salaries paid through the companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment the Inland Revenue has made of the number of single person service companies currently established primarily for the purpose of receiving fees in lieu of salaries where that person works full time for one organisation; and what plans he has to regulate these companies.

Mr. Dorrell: Aggregate information of the sort requested is not available centrally. But tax avoidance arrangements of all kinds are kept under review and action is taken as appropriate.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what guidelines have been issued to the Inland Revenue on the handling of tax returns of individuals who opt to register as self-employed rather than as an employee of a company; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Whether an individual is an employee or self-employed for a particular engagement is a question of fact and law. Inland Revenue staff receive guidance to help them deal with all aspects of tax returns.

11 Downing Street (Catering)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when catering for No. 11 Downing street was put out to contract; if this was by public tender; how many tenders were received; and for how long the contract will run.

Mr. Nelson: There is no single contract covering the provision of catering services for official functions at No. 11 Downing street. Arrangements are made for individual functions as and when they arise.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in levels of trade in manufacturing between *(a)* the second half of 1973 and September 1992 and *(b)* since September 1992.

Mr. Nelson: The latest information is available from table A9 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and its annual supplement which are available in the Library of the House, and from the Central Statistical Office database which can also be accessed through the Library.

Skills and Qualifications

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement giving the details of those policies which have been introduced by his Department in each of the last five years in order positively to encourage individuals to improve their skills and qualifications.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* In the 1991 Finance Act my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced tax relief at source for fees paid by an individual for training towards most national vocational qualifications and their Scottish equivalents.

Stamp Duty

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent representations he has received concerning the possible impact upon the property market of the abolition of stamp duty on the purchase of houses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* We have received a number of representations about stamp duty on land and buildings. I cannot anticipate my right hon. Friend's Budget statement.

Council Tax

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether listing officers are required to correct factual errors on the council tax valuation list which are brought to their attention before 1 April.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* Listing officers are required to take such steps as are reasonably practicable in the time available to ensure valuation lists are accurately compiled on 1 April 1993. This will include taking account where possible of factual errors brought to their attention before that date.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of domestic properties located on registered agricultural holdings in England and Wales have been valued for council tax purposes *(a)* by officers of the Valuation Office agency and *(b)* by valuers engaged from the private sector.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The valuation for banding of all known composite dwellings was undertaken by officers of the Valuation Office.

Small Firms

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all those regulations affecting small firms which have been abolished by his Department in each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* This information is not available in the precise form requested. The Chancellor is fully committed to relieving the regulatory burden on small businesses to the maximum possible extent. A significant number of taxes have been abolished altogether, including car tax, the investment income surcharge, the national insurance surcharge, development land tax, on-course betting duty, capital duty and a number of stamp duties. Both Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise have made major contributions to reducing the burden of tax administration on small businesses. Each Department has its own deregulation unit, strategically placed to ensure that deregulation is well to the fore when policy options are being considered. Measures implemented in recent years include significant increases in the threshold for VAT registration, the introduction of a cash accounting scheme to simplify VAT administration for smaller traders, increases in the corporation tax threshold, the introduction of an option for small businesses to submit three-line accounts instead of full accounts, and a major and continuing programme in both Departments to cut down on and simplify the forms which businesses have to complete.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library copies of all circulars and other advice issued by his Department concerning the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive.

Mr. Portillo *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* Responsibility for market testing has been passed to the efficiency unit of the Cabinet Office, which will be issuing guidance shortly.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

War Crimes

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what personnel and resources in the Crown prosecution service are now being devoted to the investigation and possible prosecution of recent war crimes.

The Solicitor-General: The war crimes unit of the Crown prosecution service, which was established to advise the police on war crimes committed between 1939 and 1945, is made up of seven lawyers together with appropriate administrative staff. The unit also provides advice to the Metropolitan police in connection with their inquiry concerning the Falkland Islands. The latter is the most recent allegation of war crimes on which the unit is currently giving advice.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Attorney-General how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

The Attorney-General: The amount spent on official entertainment in the departments for which I am responsible, the Crown prosecution service, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Serious Fraud Office, and the legal secretariat to the Law Officers, in 1991-92 totalled £32,118. The amount spent in 1992-93 as at 28 February 1993, totalled £27,563.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Competition Legislation

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what powers he has under competition legislation to investigate the role of major retailers in decisions by manufacturers to withdraw supplies from other retail outlets.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under the competition legislation, the responsibility for investigating allegations of anti-competitive practices and restrictive practices lies with the Director General of Fair Trading. Unregistered registrable restrictive agreements can be addressed under the Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976, while refusal to supply can be tackled under the Competition Act 1980 or the Resale Prices Act 1980.

Kelloggs

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer to the Director General of Fair Trading the matter of decisions by Kelloggs in respect of the supply of products to Shoprite.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Under the competition legislation the Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Bryan Carsberg, has a responsibility to investigate allegations of anti-competitive practices. I understand that Sir Bryan is looking into a complaint from Shoprite regarding the supply of products. Any evidence of possible anti-competitive behaviour should be submitted to Sir Bryan.

Electricity Interconnector

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much electricity has passed from England to France and how much electricity has passed from France to England in each year since the interconnector link opened.

Mr. Eggar: According to the "Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1992", the amounts of electricity which have passed from France to England and England to France have been as follows:

Calender year	*France to England TwH*	*England to France TwH*
1986	4·4	0·2
1987	11·7	—
1988	12·5	—
1989	13·5	0·9
1990	12·0	—
1991	16·4	—

Figures are not yet available for 1992.

Propellant Gases (Labelling)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans there are to require the labelling of canisters of propellant gases such as butane and propane with warnings that if they are inhaled the consequences could be fatal; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: The Government have no present propposals to require the labelling of aerosols containing butane or propane to warn about the dangers of inhalation, but we will continue to keep the matter under review.

Foam Furniture

Ms. Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will extend the 1 March deadline in respect of second-hand foam furniture regulations to enable clarification and safeguards to be written into the regulations in connection with the recycling of second-hand furniture by charities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh: My Department has no plans to amend those requirements of the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, as amended, which apply to second-hand upholstered furniture, and which came into force on 1 March this year.

Royal Mail

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many proposed Royal Mail capital investment projects have not proceeded in the last 10 years.

Mr. Leigh: The information requested is not available.

Stepped Piston Engine

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance is provided by his Department for the development of the stepped piston engine.

Mr. Sainsbury: My Department is not currently supporting any project specifically involving stepped piston engines. However, my Department does support other industry-led research projects including the development of vehicle engine technologies.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response the nuclear installations inspectorate has made to the representations from the British Computer Society regarding the computer safety system planned for Sizewell B; and what assessment he has made of the delay and the cost involved in implementing them.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate—NII—received a copy of the British Computer Society's—BCS—open letter which put forward suggestions for reassuring the society about the safety of the computerised primary protection system—PPS—for Sizewell B. The NII replied to BCS noting the points made. In the NII's view, none of these raise safety issues that are not already being addressed by the NII in its ongoing assessment of NE's safety case of the PPS.

Nuclear Electric has carefully considered the BCS open letter but have not identified any points which might undermine their safety case for the PPS. The company do not believe that any changes to the PPS are required and consequently do not foresee any delay leading to extra costs being incurred.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what shareholding Nuclear Electric holds in the European fast reactor consortium, SKB; and what effect Her Majesty's Government's recent decision to discontinue involvement in collaborative European breeder reactor research will have on the future of this shareholding.

Mr. Eggar: Nuclear Electric plc has a shareholding of 1·65 per cent. in SBK consortium. The future of this shareholding is a commercial matter for the company.

British Telecom

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the directors appointed as Government appointed directors of British Telecom since 1984 with their dates of appointment; what is Her Majesty's Government's policy with regard to the appointment of such directors; and under what legal provisions such appointments are made.

Mr. Leigh: Under the terms of BT's articles of association, the Government hold a 'special share' in BT. By virtue of their status as special shareholder, the Government are entitled to appoint up to two directors to the BT board.

There have been four such directors to date:

Mr. Graeme Odgers was nominated as Government director on 20 September 1984 and relinquished this post on 30 September 1986;

Mr. John Raisman was appointed as Government director on 20 September 1984 and relinquished this post on 30 September 1987;

Mr. Paul Bosonnet was appointed as Government director on 1 October 1986 and relinquished this post on 30 September 1991;

Mr. Geoffrey Mulcahy was nominated as Government director of BT on 19 October 1988. His current terms of appointment run until 19 October 1993. In addition to discharging the function of Government-appointed director, Mr. Mulcahy is a director of BT in his own right.

The Government's present policy in this area is that they do not plan to appoint a second Government director. The Government will keep the longer term issue of Government directors to BT in general under review.

Energy Policy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the policies set out in Energy Paper 42 remain those of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's current strategy on wave energy is laid out in Energy Paper 55 "Renewable Energy in the UK: The Way Forward". An updated appraisal of wave energy "A Review of Wave Energy", ETSU-R-72, was published in December 1992, a copy of which is available in the Library. A decision on any future United Kingdom wave energy programme will be made in the context of the Government's overall review of renewable energy strategy in the light of the 1992 review of wave energy, the report of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group, the coal review, and Government energy policy generally.

Support for Products under Research

Mrs. Lait: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the success of the Spur initiative.

Mr. Leigh: The support for products under research scheme offers grants of 30 per cent. of eligible project costs, up to a maximum £150,000 grant, to companies in Great Britain with up to 500 employees who need support to develop innovative products and processes. It has been a great success and in its first two years up to the end of February 1993 there have been 255 offers of grant worth a total of over £22 million. There will be an interim evaluation of the scheme in autumn this year.

Coal Imports

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to ban the import of coal from countries where there is evidence of the employment of children or the exploitation of coal miners in the coal mines providing such coal.

Mr. Eggar: As a general rule, there are severe practical difficulties in identifying goods allegedly produced using child labour or exploiting labour, given the complexities of international trade. Also, it is highly doubtful whether the social conditions that give rise to such practices can be improved by restricting trade.

In the specific case of coal from Colombia, which the hon. Member may have in mind, the authorities have assured the Government that no coal mined from pits which employ children is exported to the United Kingdom. The Government call on all states which have ratified international instruments covering slavery, servitude, forced labour or child labour to meet their obligations.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he expects the safety-related plant status monitoring system to be fully integrated into the control systems of nuclear power stations;

(2) what action he is taking to ensure that Nuclear Electric has carried out full safety checks on its safety-related plant status monitoring system; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the nuclear power stations where the safety-related plant status monitoring system *(a)* has been installed and *(b)* is under consideration for installation.

Mr. Eggar: I understand that Nuclear Electric—NE—proposes to employ the plant status monitoring system—STATUS—to augment current administrative procedures at their nuclear power plant for assessing that adequate safety systems remain available whenever equipment is temporarily taken out of service for maintenance purposes. STATUS is neither a protection nor a control system, and is currently at the trial stage and not yet in operational use at any of NE's plant. Before the system is put into operation it will require the agreement of the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate. NE has not yet asked the NII to consider the matter.

Directors Disqualification Act 1986

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how long on average it takes from the initiation of an investigation to a conviction of those prosecuted under the Directors Disqualification Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: In cases where the prosecution was brought by my Department and the conviction was obtained in 1991-92 or 1992-93, the average period between the date when an investigation with a view to prosecution was initiated and the date when a conviction was obtained for an offence under section 11 or section 13 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 was 20·3 months.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many successful prosecutions there have been in 1991 and 1992 under the Directors Disqualification Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Prosecutions by my Department for offences under section 11 or section 13 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 resulted in 83 convictions in 1991-92. So far in this financial year my Department has been informed of 54 convictions for offences under section 11 or section 13.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many investigations are pending under the Directors Disqualification Act 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: There are 76 cases where my Department is conducting an investigation with a view to prosecution under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.

Consultancy Service

Mr. Booth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the future of consultancy services offered by his Department.

Mr. Heseltine: I am pleased to announce that my Department will be working with the training and enterprise councils and pilot one-stop shops to develop and trial a package of business advisory services which will build on and ultimately succeed the very successful DTI enterprise initiative consultancy scheme.

Businesses are not homogeneous. Strengths and weaknesses vary between individual firms. Their problems do not remain static. Rather they change as the firms and the markets in which they operate evolve.

In considering DTI's own business services I have, therefore, decided that we should begin to move away from the idea of rigid, narrowly defined national schemes towards a more flexible system responsive to consumer needs and delivered locally.

The new package of support will include a new diagnostic service, a consultancy brokerage service, continuation in some form of consultancy support and technology-related advice.

To provide for the development of this new package of services, I am revising the rate of subsidy paid by my Department under the existing enterprise initiative consultancy scheme.

At present the DTI meets two thirds of the cost of consultancy in assisted areas and urban programme areas and half the cost elsewhere. These rates will be reduced to one half the cost in assisted areas and one third elsewhere. The revised rates will apply for all applications received after 4 pm on Wednesday 24 March 1993.

The scheme will continue until 31 March 1994 as originally scheduled.

Beyond that I am convinced that consultancy support will have a continuing role to play. The new flexible package will enable it to continue beyond the previously designated closure date of the consultancy scheme.

The new services will be developed, trialed and introduced alongside the consultancy scheme to ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

I am convinced that the comprehensive range of local services outlined in these proposals, contracted through TECs and delivered through the one-stop shops where they exist and through TECs elsewhere, will provide high-quality support for business. It will not only provide support suited to business needs; it will also make cost effective use of public funds.

In doing so it will enable the Department to assist a larger number of firms than at present while enabling them to choose from a wider variety of support services which meet their needs.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much of the surplus in the Post Office superannuation fund can be attributed to *(a)* the Royal Mail, *(b)* Post Office Counters and *(c)* Parcelforce.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 5 March 1993]*: The Post Office has two pension schemes: the Post Office staff superannuation scheme, which all staff who were employed before 1 April 1987 were eligible to join, and the Post Office pension scheme which is open to all staff who have joined the Post Office since 1 April 1987. Both these schemes are Post Office-wide schemes, and there has never been any attribution of any part of their surpluses to any of the constituent businesses of the Post Office. This information is therefore not available.

Foreign Investment

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent research has been undertaken into the levels of Japanese and United States investment in the United Kingdom and the factors encouraging or discouraging such investment.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 9 March 1993]*: Specifically commissioned research into the levels of Japanese and United States investment in the United Kingdom is not necessary since information on this is reported regularly by various governmental and other bodies.

My Department's Invest in Britain Bureau commissions research from consultants to assist its promotion of the United Kingdom as the preferred location for manufacturing investment in Europe. This information is not published as it is commercially sensitive and would be of value to competitors.

Qualifications and Skills

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement giving the details of those policies which have been introduced by his

Department in each of the last five years in order positively to encourage individuals to improve their skills and qualifications.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* My Department aims to ensure British business has access to an adequate supply of people with the right skills and attributes. It does this by encouraging business to invest in the training of its work force, listening to what business has to say, and, where appropriate, influencing the policies of the Department for Education and the Department of Employment who have primary responsibility for education and training. Specific programmes supported by my Department in furtherance of these aims include the teaching company scheme, senior academics into industry and the Shell technology enterprise programme.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he has any plans to meet representatives of the Engineering Employers Federation, the Confederation of British Industry or the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance to discuss ways in which his policies can more effectively encourage individuals to improve their qualifications or skills.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* The President of the Board of Trade regularly meets a range of industrial bodies to discuss issues of concern to industry, including qualifications and skills.

Airbus Agreement

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the full terms of the US-EC Airbus agreement *(a)* in respect of aircraft engines and *(b)* in respect of other matters.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* Since the agreement applies only to support offered for the development of the airframes of large civil aircraft, it does not contain provisions relating to aero-engines. However, the agreement commits the signatories to seek its multilateralisation and its expansion to cover aircraft of all sizes, engines and equipment, through the GATT agreement on trade in civil aircraft. Negotiations are currently under way on this extension.

Copies of the agreement between the United States and the European Community have been available in the Library of the House since 23 June 1992. The text is also available on request from my Department.

EDUCATION

Music Teachers

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many full-time music teachers were employed in state schools in 1979, 1985, 1989 and the latest available date.

Mr. Forth: Information on the numbers of full-time music teachers is available from school staffing surveys. The four secondary school staffing surveys show the following numbers of full-time teachers who taught music at some point in the survey week and, regardless of whether they taught any music in the survey week, the number of full-time teachers who held a post A-level qualification in the subject:—

Maintained Secondary Schools in England

	1977	*1984*	*1988*	*1992*
Number of full-time teachers teaching some music (thousands)	10·4	9·3	7·1	5·8
Number of full-time teachers with a post 'A' level qualification in music (thousands)	14·3	11·6	9·2	7·6

The primary school staffing survey carried out in 1987 showed that 15,200 full-time teachers teaching in English primary schools had a post A-level qualification in music and that 18,600 full-time teachers had responsibility for curriculum leadership in music.

Research and Development

Dr. Moonie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the net expenditure on research and development activities by the Higher Education Funding Council, and its predecessors, the Universities Funding Council, University Grants Committee and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council, in each year since 1979 *(a)* in cash terms and *(b)* at current prices.

Mr. Boswell: Estimated expenditure on research and development funded by the University Grants Committee, the Universities Funding Council and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council from 1979-80 to 1991-92 is shown in the table. There are no outturn spending estimates for later years. The figures are based on a notional attribution of spending between teaching and research. The funding councils have not separately earmarked funding for teaching and research.

UGC/UFC and PCFC funding of research and development

£ million

Outturn	*Cash*	*1991-92 prices*
1979-80	359	832
1980-81	441	863
1981-82	484	864
1982-83	535	891
1983-84	551	878
1984-85	564	855
1985-86	609	875
1986-87	655	912
1987-88	695	917
1988-89	755	929
1989-90	758	875
1990-91	789	844
[1]1991-92	881	881

[1] Estimate.

Notes:

1. *Source:* Annual Review of Government Funded Research and Development, 1992.
2. Figures exclude research into the humanities.
3. Figures include PCFC funding for research from 1988-89 onwards.
4. Figures for 1989-90 onwards are calculated on a revised basis which is not directly comparable to previous years.
5. Figures for 1991-92 only include Computer Board.

Asylum Seekers

Mr. Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what education grants or other forms of assistance are available to asylum seekers to enable them to take up full-time courses *(a)* while their applications to remain are

determined, *(b)* when they have been granted exceptional leave to remain and *(c)* when they have been granted indefinite leave to remain; and what is their status, as seen by college authorities, when in each of the above categories.

Mr. Boswell: Mandatory awards and student loans, and help from the access funds, are available to eligible students on qualifying courses of higher education who have been ordinarily resident in the British islands throughout the three years immediately preceding the start of the academic year in which their course commences. Students who are recognised as refugees within the meaning of the United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees and who are now ordinarily resident in the British islands are exempt from the three-year requirement, as are their spouses and children. They are eligible for support from the date of their recognition as refugees. This provision does not apply to students who have been granted exceptional or indefinite leave to remain, for whom local education authorities are free to make discretionary awards. Discretionary awards may also be available for most other courses of further and higher education not designated for mandatory awards. Other assistance may be available through refugee charitable organisations in the form of scholarship programmes.

Further and higher education institutions may not, in most cases, lawfully charge a higher rate of fee to students who are recognised as refugees or have been granted leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom than to students who meet the three year ordinary residence requirement.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Boswell: Since November 1991, the Department has contracted out—that is, engaged private sector contractors to undertake work previously done by the Department's staff—without market testing in one area: the professional architectural scrutiny of school building projects. The successful contractor is Hurd Rolland of Berkhamsted; there was no in-house bid because this is a small-scale pilot to test whether external contractors can provide the necessary service satisfactorily.

Since November 1991 the Department has also let contracts as a result of market tests undertaken before that date. Previously in-house costings rather than in-house bids were used to frame value-for-money judgments.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy to amend section 4 of the Special Educational Needs Regulations 1983 to require that local education authorities seek written professional advice on a child's potential for learning and the provision required to realise this potential as part of any section 5 assessments;

(2) if he will seek to amend section 4 of the Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations 1983 so as to secure that local education authorities seek out written professional advice related to the kind and level of provision needed by a child whom the authority decides to place in an ordinary school.

Mr. Forth: Paragraph 2(1) of schedule 8 to the Eduation Bill, currently before Parliament, provides that regulations shall make provision as to the advice which a local education authority are to seek when making an assessment of a child's special educational needs. We shall be consulting widely on the regulations.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the Education Act 1981 so as to establish statutory rights for non-statemented children with special educational needs;

(2) if he will make it his policy to place an obligation upon school governors and head teachers to obtain professional advice regarding the form of special education required by statemented and non-statemented children with special educational needs.

Mr. Forth: Clause 153 of the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, places statutory duties on the governing body of all maintained schools to use their best endeavours to secure that all registered pupils with special educational needs receive the necessary special educational provision. This clause also requires governors to report annually on the implementation of their school's policy for pupils with special educational needs.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to issue new guidelines to local education authorities on defining efficient use of resources within section 2 of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Forth: No. It is for local education authorities themselves to reach decisions on the efficient use of their resources.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the Education Act 1981 to ensure that local education authorities have a duty to ensure that children with special educational needs are not deprived of the opportunity to realise their full potential.

Mr. Forth: A child's potential is relevant in deciding whether he or she has special educational needs. The Education Bill, currently before Parliament, reinforces LEAs' duties to arrange appropriate provision to meet pupils' special educational needs where they are required to determine that provision.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the Education Act 1981 so as to grant the rights of parents to insist on an assessment under section 5 of the Act if they disagreed with any changes to statements of children with special educational needs via the statement amendment process.

Mr. Forth: Clause 162(2) of the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, provides for the parent of a child with a statement of special educational needs to ask the local education authority to arrange for full assessment under clause 158 to be made. The authority shall comply with the request where a further assessment is necessary providing that such an assessment has not taken place within the preceding six months.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the Education Act 1981 so as to secure that local education authorities consider their duties to explore the possibility of integrating special needs children into mainstream schools under section 2 as part of the assessment and statementing procedures under section 5, and prior to considering their duties to consult parents under section 7;

(2) if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the Education Act 1981 so as to remove the responsibility on local education authorities to satisfy themselves that the integration of a single child with special educational needs must represent an efficient use of resources.

Mr. Forth: Our policy is to encourage sensible integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools. Clause 152 of the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, puts a qualified duty on local education authorities to integrate unless that duty is incompatible with the wishes of the parent.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to give statutory force to the principles outlined in his departmental circulars 1/83 and 22/89 relating to the involvement of a child or young person in determining the nature of his or her special educational needs provision.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to my remarks made during debates in the Committee stage of the Education Bill, *Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 26 January 1993, c. 1139-40.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to place an obligation on local education authorities issuing new statements or amendments to existing statements for children with special educational needs to secure that such statements are produced no later than the beginning of the term prior to the one when they are intended to come into effect.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to my remarks made during debates in the Committee stage of the Education Bill, *Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 26 January 1993, c. 1108-9.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will make it his policy to seek to amend part II of schedule 1 to the Education Act 1981 to secure that the form and contents of a statement include reference to any non-educational needs;

(2) if he will amend section 10 of the Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations 1983 so as to ensure that all statements refer to the amount, type and content of the provision to be made and the qualifications of the person designated to deliver it.

Mr. Forth: Clause 159(2) of the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, provides that a statement of special educational needs shall be in such form and contain such information as may be prescribed. We shall be consulting widely on the regulations.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to amend section 10 of the Special Educational Needs Regulations 1983 requiring a school to be named within a statement.

Mr. Forth: Under paragraph 3(3) of schedule 9, to the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, a local education authority shall name the parent's preferred school in the statement of special educational needs, subject to prescribed exceptions. If those exceptions apply or the parent has not expressed a preference for a school, clause 159(4)*(b)* requires the LEA to specify the name of any school or institution which it considers appropriate for the child and which should be specified in the statement.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to amend section 12 of the Education (Special Educational Needs) Regulations 1983 to place a duty on a local education authority to whose area a family of a child with special educational needs has moved, to fulfil the needs expressed in the statement established by their former local education authority in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Forth: Paragraph 7(2) of schedule 9, to the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, allows for regulations to make provision for the transfer of a statement of special educational needs from one local education authority to another, and for the new authority to have the duty to maintain that statement. We shall be consulting widely on the regulations.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to seek to amend the Education Act 1981 to ensure that children are not placed in special schools without the provision of a statement or the formal commencement of a section 5 assessment.

Mr. Forth: The Department's guidance in circular 22/89 is that children in special schools should normally either have the protection of a statement or be undergoing a formal assessment under section 5 of the 1981 Education Act. The Education Bill, currently before Parliament, will not make this a statutory requirement.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to separate the power to assess statements for children with special educational needs from the power to decide on and make appropriate provision outlined within statements.

Mr. Forth: Part III of the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, makes it clear that the duty to assess, make statements of special educational needs and, unless the parent has made suitable alternative arrangements, arrange the provision specified in the statement, remains the responsibility of the local education authority.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to place a duty on local education authorities to establish a minimal procedure for the annual review of statements for children with special needs to include *(a)* the preparation of written reports and their submission to parents and *(b)* the granting of a meeting with parents to discuss the review.

Mr. Forth: Clause 162(6) of the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, provides that regulations may make provision as to the manner in which reviews of statements of special educational needs are to be conducted. We will be consulting widely on the content of the regulations.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to place a legal duty upon the relevant authorities to provide non-educational provision to

children with special educational needs whose assessments under section 5 of the Education Act 1981 have specified the need for such provision.

Mr. Forth: I refer the hon. Member to my remarks made during debates in the Committee stage of the Education Bill, *Official Report, Standing Committee E*, 26 January 1993, c. 1128-31.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to seek to amend section 9(1) of the Education Act 1981 to enable parents of non-statemented children to request local education authority assessments under section 5 of the Act.

Mr. Forth: Clause 163 of the Education Bill, currently before Parliament, provides for the parent of a child who does not have a statement of his special educational needs to ask the authority to arrange for an assessment under clause 158 of the Bill.

Schools (Access)

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will establish a target date by which time all schools in the United Kingdom will be wheelchair-accessible;

(2) what plans he has to seek to amend the Education Act 1981 so as to remove from the category of children with special educational needs those children whose only problem is that the school that they wish to attend does not offer full and equal physical access;

(3) if he will place an obligation upon local education authorities to *(a)* seek professional advice on adapting a mainstream school for the needs of a child with special educational needs, *(b)* make an assessment of the child's mobility needs and *(c)* receive an estimate from a professional builder of the cost of the adaptation work to be undertaken at the school, prior to taking a decision under section 2 of the Education Act 1981.

Mr. Forth: The Government do not intend to set a target date by which time all schools should be adapted to allow wheelchair access. Government policy is to encourage local education authorities to improve access to school buildings to facilitate the integration of disabled pupils into mainstream provision. When established, the Funding Agency for Schools will also contribute to the furtherance of this policy.

Youth Crime

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to the answer of the Home Secretary of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *625*, what future plans he has to increase the amount committed by his Department in 1992-93 under its grants for education support and training for youth crime prevention schemes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* No grants were provided for youth crime prevention schemes under the Department's 1992-93 programme of grants for education support and training—GEST. With the 1993-94 GEST programme, my right hon. Friend will be grant aiding expenditure by English local education authorities of £4·1 million on such schemes. Funding beyond 1993-94 will be considered in this year's review of public expenditure plans.

SCOTLAND

School Populations

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average size of each school population for which each education authority in Scotland is responsible.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the average school population for each education authority is as follows.

Average school population as at September 1991

	Primary	*Secondary*
Scotland	186	708
Borders	111	656
Central	200	879
Dumfries and Galloway	110	558
Fife	215	1,118
Grampian	161	789
Highland	96	519
Lothian	233	722
Strathclyde	230	765
Tayside	171	689
Orkney	75	231
Shetland	64	183
Western Isles	58	144
Strathclyde Divisions		
Argyll and Bute	74	454
Ayr	228	778
Dunbarton	258	897
Glasgow	248	660
Lanark	220	868
Renfrew	294	780

NHS Trusts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it the policy of his Department to decline to advise health boards on ways of arranging transferring services to trusts so that the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 do not apply.

Mr. Stewart: No such advice has been given by my Department. As indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) on 23 February at column *565*, health boards and trusts have been advised to seek legal advice on the applicability of transfer of undertakings regulations in relation to specific proposals for the market testing of services.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decisions to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Ian Lang: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 17 February, at column *169*. Of the functions listed in that answer, property management at the Scottish police college, the management and maintenance of court houses, the building and plan maintenance for the Scottish fire service training school

and property management at the marine laboratory, Aberdeen were all previously undertaken by the Property Services Agency on behalf of the Scottish Office. The toll collection at Erskine bridge was examined and tenders invited under the procedures obtaining before the publication of the White Paper "Competing for Quality" in November 1991. External tenders were examined against the existing in-house service. The audit of two national health service trusts involved new work. The Scottish Office audit unit submitted bids for the work but these were unsuccessful. I am encouraging in-house bids in all the activities currently being market tested.

Infertility Services

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to publish the report produced by a working group of the national medical advisory committee on infertility services in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The report is being published today and will be welcomed by all who are interested in planning and providing services to the infertile. It contains valuable guidance on good practice and on the organisation and management of infertility services at all levels of treatment. Accordingly, I have accepted, or commended to health boards, all but one of the report's recommendations which when implemented will bring much needed improvements to the services provided for childless couples. The one exception is the recommendation supporting the establishment of a centrally funded NHS service for high-tech treatments such as in-vitro fertilisation and gamete intra-fallopian tube transfer. I do not consider that these services meet the criteria for central NHS funding and have concluded that decisions on the provision of such services are a matter for individual health boards. Boards may provide or purchase high-tech assisted reproduction services from the general resources already allocated to them: as is the case for many other treatments, the judgment of the priority for these services, as compared to others, is for them to make.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many juvenile offenders are in Scottish prisons at ages of *(a)* 14 years, *(b)* 15 years, *(c)* 16 years and *(d)* 17 years; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The information is as follows:

	Number
14 years	Nil
15 years	Nil
16 years	72
17 years	152

The figures for 16 and 17-year-olds relate to prisons and young offender institutions but exclude those held on remand.

Prisoners (Suicide)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prisoners on remand or after conviction have *(a)* committed suicide, *(b)* attempted suicide or *(c)* been recorded as having attempted self-mutilation in the last five years for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of suicides*	*Number of attempted suicides*	*Number of attempted self mutilations*
1988-89	9	40	18
1989-90	4	18	23
1990-91	5	30	26
1991-92	5	24	16
[2]1992-93	[1]4	22	13

[1] Additionally there are 4 outstanding fatal accident inquiries.
[2] To 28 February.

Prison Escort (Escapes)

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many escapes there have been from prison escort in each of the last 12 months; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Escapes from prison escorts

	Number
1992	
March	3
April	2
May	4
June	2
July	1
August	4
September	2
Octoer	2
November	1
December	5
1993	
January	1
February	2
	29

Prison Officers (Assaults)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of convictions for assault on *(a)* male prison officers and *(b)* female prison officers in each of the past 14 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* Records of convictions for assault on prison staff are not maintained.

Shetland Oil Spillage

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what sub-littoral monitoring of benthic marine communities in the vicinity of MV Braer has been undertaken to assess the immediate impacts of the oil spillage in the Shetland Islands.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* Adverse weather has prevented any structured programme of diving, although local divers have made occasional descents which indicate significant mortality of macro-benthic species. The marine nature conservation review team from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee carried out work between 25 February and 2 March but the results of this are not yet available.

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what monitoring of the marine plants and invertebrate communities in the shorelines in the vicinity of MV Braer has been undertaken to assess the immediate impacts of the oil spillage in the Shetland Islands.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* Adverse conditions prevented immediate post-spill monitoring. Scottish Natural Heritage marine biologists have recently visited the area, but their observations have not yet been assessed. Monitoring will be kept under review by the ecological steering group.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what additional funding he has allocated to Scottish Natural Heritage to undertake studies and other work in the aftermath of the grounding of the MV Braer.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* None. On present information, Scottish Natural Heritage currently has sufficient resources available to it to fund such research studies or other work likely to arise following the MV Braer incident.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library copies of all circulars and other advice issued by his Department concerning the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The national health service in Scotland management executive wrote to health authorities in Scotland on 11 December 1992 on the need to seek legal advice on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. A copy of this advice is being placed in the Library. No other general advice has been issued by my Department.

Housing

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the number of new-build *(a)* general needs, *(b)* special needs and *(c)* sheltered houses constructed by local authorities in each year since 1980.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 20 January 1993]:* Information on housebuilding by category of need is not readily available for the years prior to 1986, and could be extracted only at disproportionate cost. The available information is set out in the table.

Local authority housebuilding in Scotland

Year	Category of need: General needs	Special needs[1]	Sheltered housing[2]
1986	1,192	540	273
1987	1,068	592	321
1988	1,249	632	312
1989	953	498	330
1990	[3]677	[3]294	[3]207
1991	[3]567	[3]419	[3]272

[1] Consists of sheltered, sheltered wheelchair, amenity, ambulant disabled and wheelchair housing.
[2] Includes sheltered wheelchair.
[3] Based on incomplete returns.

Water Services

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many responses he received to his consultation on the future of water services in Scotland, in the form of *(a)* letters, *(b)* names on petitions and *(c)* individually signed postcards; and how many submissions were in favour of (i) continued control of water services by local authorities with no privatisation, (ii) control by a body other than a local authority and (iii) for privatisation options; and, in the last case, how many were for each method of private involvement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 4 March 1993]:* In response to the consultation paper we have received more than 4,800 letters; 11 large petitions and a number of smaller petitions which together have over 85,000 signatures; and more than 56,500 pre-printed postcards some of which were received before the consultation paper was issued. The petitions and postcards oppose privatisation of the water and sewerage services. Other responses are being studied and a full analysis is not yet available.

Minerals Extraction

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuant to his answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *562*, if he will give the amounts received by the Forestry Commission from licences and leases for permitting the extraction of minerals in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* The information is as follows. Detailed records are only available for the last four years; the amounts for the first six years are therefore based on estimates.

Year ended 31 March	£ million
1983	[1]0·3
1984	[1]0·3
1985	[1]0·4
1986	[1]0·4
1987	[1]0·5
1988	[1]0·5
1989	0·6
1990	0·7
1991	0·9
1992	0·8

[1] Estimate.

School Boards

Mr. Norman Hogg: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many schools are eligible to have a school board; and how many have such a board currently in operation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 1 March 1993]:* A total of 2,907 schools in Scotland are eligible to have a school board. Of these, 2,199 currently have such a board.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Belfast Education and Library Board

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was *(a)* the number and *(b)* the proportion of applicants for positions with the Belfast education and library board in the last three years who were classified as (i) Protestant, (ii) Roman Catholic and (iii) from outside Northern Ireland or non-religious; and what proportion of each group was appointed to positions with the board.

Mr. Hanley: The information, as supplied by the Belfast education and library board, is as follows:

	Protestant		*Roman Catholic*		*Non-denominational*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
1. *Applicants*						
1990	3,722	50·12	3,349	45·10	355	4·78
1991	2,792	49·10	2,649	46·59	245	4·31
1992	1,959	46·76	1,949	46·53	281	6·71
2. *Appointees*						
1990	118	47·39	108	43·37	23	9·24
1991	222	49·22	212	47·01	17	3·77
1992	122	44·53	145	52·92	7	2·55

Applicants and appointees from outside Northern Ireland have, where possible, been classified as Protestant or Roman Catholic.

Homelessness

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to extend the Housing Executive's new build programme to house homeless people in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The Housing Executive's new build programme is not required to be extended to provide housing for homeless people in Northern Ireland.

Government Employees

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, whether prospective Government employees in Northern Ireland are asked to indicate on their application forms whether they are EC or non-EC nationals.

Mr. Mates: Prospective Government employees in Northern Ireland are not asked whether they are EC or non-EC nationals. Applicants are asked to state their place of birth and, if they have changed their nationality since birth, to state their nationality.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Mates: Expenditure on Department of Finance and Personnel official entertainment has been:

	£
1991-92	29,000
1992-93	43,000

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much was spent of offical entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office, which includes the Private Office of the Lord Privy Seal and Lord President as well as the Judicial Committee and Privy Council proper, spent £6,782 in 1991-92 and £10,477 in 1992-93, to 8 March 1993, on official entertainment.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Prime Minister's Questions

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord President of the Council, pursuant to his answer of 5 March to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), *Official Report*, column *334*, how many of the five questions tabled for answer to the Prime Minister by each of the two hon. Members mentioned were *(a)* reached and *(b)* answered by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Newton: Three of the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) were answered orally by the Prime Minister, and the other two were answered by me. Two of the Questions asked by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) were answered orally by the Prime Minister, one was answered by me, and one was not reached; the remaining question is due for answer on Tuesday 16 March.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Cyprus

15. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when a Minister from his Department last visited Cyprus to obtain information as to the situation on the island; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: Our high commission in Nicosia is in close and regular contact with both communities. I have frequent meetings with Cypriot Ministers, and all parties to the dispute, in London and elsewhere.

Since the last ministerial visit in 1983, we have believed it important not to undertake initiatives that could cut across negotiations by United Nations envoys in Cyprus itself. In particular a ministerial visit would raise problems concerning the nature and level of contact with the Turkish-Cypriot community. The timing of any such move must be most carefully considered.

31. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on what steps the British Government have taken to promote a successful outcome from the forthcoming United Nations-sponsored talks on Cyprus.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he will take to encourage greater progress towards a political settlement in Cyprus.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We give full support to the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General to promote a negotiated settlement to the Cyprus dispute. Talks are due to resume in New York shortly. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State discussed the way forward with Dr. Boutros-Ghali on 3 March and with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Mr. Cetin, on 26 February. We will continue to work hard to prepare the ground for a successsful outcome to negotiations.

36. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to meet the new President of Cyprus to discuss the situation on the island.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have congratulated Mr. Clerides on his recent election success and welcome his commitment to attend continuing negotiations on the intercommunal dispute to be held by the United Nations in New York. No firm date has yet been set for a meeting with President Clerides, but we hope a mutually convenient opportunity may be found in advance of those talks.

Dalai Lama

17. **Mr. Illsely:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which members of Her Majesty's Government will be available to meet the Dalai Lama during his visit to Britain later this year.

Mr. Goodlad: I understand that the Dalai Lama will be visiting this country privately in May. As a distinguished religious leader and Nobel Prize winner he is very welcome. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has indicated that, if a suitable time can be found, he would be glad to have a private meeting with his holiness. I do not know the private plans of other members of the Government.

United States of America

18. **Mr. Ottoway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on United Kingdom/United States relations.

Mr. Hurd: United Kingdom/United States relations are in excellent shape and we expect them to remain so.

25. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met the United States ambassador to the Court of St. James's to discuss co-operation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs meets the United States ambassador on a fairly regular basis. They last met on 3 March.

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what high level contacts have taken place between the United Kingdom Government and the United States Government on future relations between Britain and the United States of America since the new United States presidency began.

Mr. Hurd: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister visited Washington for talks with President Clinton and members of his administration on 24 February.

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer met United States Treasury Secretary Bentsen last weekend, and I have had meetings with Secretary Warren Christopher and Defence Secretary Les Aspin.

India

19. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of India about human rights in Nagaland.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have regularly raised human rights with the Government of India.

Sudan

20. **Mr. Robert Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have taken place concerning the situation in the Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have discussed the situation in Sudan with our EC partners, the United States and other countries which give relief, and also with Governments in Africa and the middle east. We are following up at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the human rights situation in Sudan adopted by an overwhelming majority in December. We hope that the United Nations Commission will agree to appoint a rapporteur to investigate the situation in Sudan on a public basis.

South Africa

21. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with representatives of Governments of front-line states regarding progress in the Republic of South Africa towards ending the policy of apartheid.

Mr. Hurd: We share the wish of all states in the region to see non-racial democracy established in South Africa. We discuss progress on this with representatives of those states at every suitable opportunity.

37. **Mr. John Carlisle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will have further discussion with President de Klerk and other members of the South African Government regarding their proposed constitutional changes.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We shall keep in regular touch with them, and with the other main parties in the constitutional negotiations, as the process develops.

Angola

22. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking at the United Nations Security Council to support the Government of Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: On 29 January, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 804 which, among other things, calls on member states to render economic and technical assistance to the Government of Angola for reconstruction and development.

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the leaders of UNITA since the beginning of 1993; and what was their response.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We were actively involved in United Nations Security Council resolution 804 of 29 January and the EC statement on Angola of 17 February, which condemn UNITA's initial rejection of the results of the elections of 29-30 September 1992 and call for a ceasefire and dialogue between the Government of Angola and UNITA. Officials, including our outgoing ambassador, have reinforced this message with the UNITA office in London.

Maastricht Treaty

23. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his European Community counterparts about changes in the powers, accountability and openness of European Community institutions consequential upon ratification of the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The Edinburgh European Council agreed a range of measures to increase transparency and openness in Community decision-making. The first results are being felt, for example in the televising of some Council debates, even before the Maastricht treaty comes into force. The Edinburgh Council also welcomed the measures decided and announced by the Commission on greater openness.

29. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions he has had with his counterparts in the other EC countries regarding the Maastricht treaty.

Mr. Garel-Jones: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs regularly meets his counterparts in other member states. The Maastricht treaty is frequently a topic of discussion.

Diplomats (Experience)

24. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many senior diplomats in overseas posts have any industrial or commercial experience; and if he will list them.

Mr. Goodlad: Forty-five senior diplomats of first secretary rank or above, have gained direct industrial or commercial experience through attachments to companies during their diplomatic service careers; 20 are currently serving overseas. Fifty senior diplomats have undertaken attachments to the Department of Trade and Industry; 32 are currently at overseas posts. A number of senior diplomats had commercial or industrial experience before joining the diplomatic service. The figures for these categories are not readily available. A total of 669 senior diplomats have trained for, and carried out, overseas commercial work. Of these, 433 are currently at post. Nearly half our senior locally engaged staff overseas are engaged in commercial work.

Kashmir

26. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has of human rights abuses in Kashmir; and what representations he has made to the Government of India.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received representations from a number of sources about abuses of human rights in Kashmir. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister discussed the situation in Kashmir with the Indian Prime Minister in January, who assured him of his commitment to respect for human rights, that allegations of human rights abuses were investigated, and that those responsible for wrongdoing were punished.

Nuclear Conflict

27. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new proposals he has to reduce the possibility of a nuclear conflict.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Our strategy for preventing nuclear conflict will continue to rest on two pillars: the maintenance of an effective minimum deterrent, and wholehearted support for the nuclear non-proliferation regime. We attach the highest importance to securing the indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty in 1995.

Ukraine

28. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's relations with the Ukraine.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have good relations with Ukraine. President Kravchuk's visit to the United

Kingdom on 9 to 12 February helped to consolidate ties, and gave British business men opportunities to make useful contacts. During the visit a bilateral treaty, which sets out the framework for future relations, and a number of other agreements were signed.

Bosnia

30. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the United Kingdom has to contribute to a multinational peacekeeping force in Bosnia.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: British troops are already an important part of the relief effort in Bosnia. They will no doubt continue to be needed. If there is a durable ceasefire and a workable agreement, there may need to be a United Nations peacekeeping effort alongside the relief operation. I cannot say whether there should be a change in the role of the British troops in Bosnia until a workable agreement has been secured and the nature of any peacekeeping operation been determined.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the suitability of Tuzla airfield in northern Bosnia for taking heavy transport planes; if mines have been cleared; what plans he has for using the airport to deliver aid; and what assessment he has made of the number of refugees and availability of supplies.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The current assessment of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees is that road access and delivery of supplies to Tuzla are adequate and that there is no need to open the Tuzla airfield for the delivery of supplies by air. The possibility of using the airfield in future is being kept under constant review but would require an extension of UNPROFOR's mandate as well as additional troops on the ground to secure the airport.

There are now estimated 70,000 to 100,000 refugees in Tuzla and more are expected following the recent fighting in eastern Bosnia. Shelter and supplies for the refugees are being prepared and the United Kingdom has already offered to provide additional aid to help meet the needs of the expected refugees.

Serbia and Montenegro

32. **Mr. Raymond S. Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are being taken to improve the enforcement of sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are providing material assistance to help the customs authorities of Serbia's neighbours to improve sanctions enforcement. We are also contributing to international sanctions assistance missions to those states, and welcome the recent appointment by the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe of a sanctions co-ordinator.

European Assembly

33. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, he will bring forward proposals at the next intergovernmental conference of the European Community, to put the European Assembly on a more representative basis.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We have no present plans to do so.

Balkans

34. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in the Balkans.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our European Community partners have made clear our full support for the international conference for the former Yugoslavia. It is vital to achieve settlements in Bosnia and Croatia, and to prevent the conflict spreading into Kosovo or Macedonia. We are devoting considerable resources to the provision of humanitarian relief to those caught up in the fighting.

Yemen

35. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have good relations with Yemen. I made a worthwhile visit there in December. I was able to demonstrate British support for Yemen's move towards establishing a democratically elected government, and to support British aid and trade initiatives in Yemen.

Visas

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 15 February, *Official Report*, column *30*, concerning Shenaz Begum, Afsar Khan and Shaira Begum, what consideration is being given to the submission of further evidence dated 10 February by the representative of the children's father; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British high commission at Islamabad considered that the further evidence submitted by Mr. Ismail Ghani on 10 February tended to support the passport applications of Shenaz Begum, Afsar Khan, and Shaira Begum but some doubts still remained. As the hon. Member knows, the case was subsequently referred to the Home Office on 2 March. Once the outcome of its inquiries is known, the passport applications will be considered again.

Minority Languages

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries have signed, or have declared an intention to sign, the European charter for regional or minority languages; and which languages each country has specified or expressed an intention to specify, under article 3 of the charter.

Mr. Garel-Jones: The following countries have signed the Charter:

Austria
Cyprus
Denmark
Finland
Germany
Hungary
Liechtenstein
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands

Norway
Spain

No countries have declared an intention to sign and none has specified or expressed an intention to specify a language.

Poland

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the timetable for negotiations on Poland's application to join the EC.

Mr. Garel-Jones: We support Poland's accession to the EC when she is ready. The Edinburgh European Council endorsed this objective. There is no precise timetable. The United Kingdom will work to use the association agreement to prepare Poland for the earliest membership possible.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received from Her Majesty's Government representatives in El Salvador concerning human rights abuses and the pursuit of the perpetrators of such crimes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Garel-Jones: Her Majesty's ambassador reports on human rights and other issues. The end of the armed conflict has led to an improvement in human rights observance, but we remain concerned by continuing reports of abuses. We will continue to support UN monitoring of implementation of all aspects of the peace accords in El Salvador.

Western Sahara

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government concerning the conduct of the proposed referendum in western Sahara.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have been fully involved in consultations in the Security Council on western Sahara which led to the adoption of resolution 809 on 2 March on the proposed referendum.

EMPLOYMENT

Industrial Accidents

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many safety reports required under the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations have been submitted to the Health and Safety Executive for each of the last four years; how many have been accepted as complying with CIMAH provisions in each year; and if she will list those companies whose submissions have not yet been accepted as complying.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

By 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is centrally available, a total of 668 safety reports required by the Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazards—CIMAH—Regulations 1984 had been received by the Health and Safety Executive—HSE—since the regulations came into force on 1 April 1985.

Of these, the HSE considers that 207 reports provide sufficient and suitable information but that 109 do not. The remaining reports are still subject to the HSE's multi-discipline assessment.

It is not the HSE's policy to publish the names of those companies whose reports do not meet the requirements of CIMAH.

Family Perspective and Life Cycle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) in which publication, speech or statement her Department has described how it takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of her Department;

(2) if she will make a statement on how her Department takes account of the family perspective and the family life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of the Department.

Mr. McLoughlin: The objectives, activities and expenditure plans of the Department are set out in the latest departmental report, Cm 2205. Full account is taken of the implications for the family in developing and operating policies and programmes. For example, this January, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched a booklet entitled, "Rising to the Challenge", which encourages employers and individuals to consider the advantages of women achieving their full potential in the workplace. In April 1993, a new out-of-school child care grant will be introduced, which will make it easier for parents of school-age children to participate fully in the labour market.

Training

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps are taken by training and enterprise councils to ensure that proper training is given by placements with employers.

Mr. McLoughlin: All training and enterprise councils are aiming for employer placements, which form an integral part of youth training. The terms of their contract with us require that they satisfy quality criteria and provide each trainee with an individual training plan which specifies the work experience element.

Job Clubs

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment she has made of the performance of job clubs in the south-east of England.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Hartley Booth, dated 10 March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the performance of Jobclubs in the South East of England. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

A national study carried out by my Research and Evaluation Branch in 1989 concluded that nationally,

attending a Jobclub increased an individual's chance of finding a full-time job by about 50%. This study was followed by a nationwide review of the performance of Jobclubs, carried out by my Consultancy and Management Services in August 1991, which confirmed the effectiveness of the Jobclub programme for the long-term unemployed. Several locations in the South East of England were visited during the fieldwork for the review.

Information is collected monthly to measure the performance of individual Jobclubs. The information is collated to give area, regional and national totals. Between April 1992 and January 1993, 41% of people leaving Jobclubs in London and the South East Region left to go into jobs. This compares with a national figure of 45%. Overall, in the London and South East Region some 56% went into jobs, further education, training or self-employment compared with 59% nationally. However, these figures have been achieved against a background of a 20% rise in unemployment in the Region over the last year, compared with a 15% rise nationally. London and the South East Region still achieves 27% of all our Jobclub placings into jobs.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Potato Processing Industry

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in the potato processing industries five years ago and at the latest available date.

Mr. McLoughlin: Estimates for the potato processing industries are not available separately. The figures are aggregated with data for other food processing industries.

Self-employment

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her estimate of the number of people who are simultaneously employed and self-employed.

Mr. McLoughlin: The latest estimate for Great Britain from the summer—June to August—1992 labour force survey, is that there are 250,000 such people, not seasonally adjusted. This total comprises 189,000 people who were employees in their main job and self-employed in their second job, and 61,000 people who were self-employed in their main job and employees in their second job.

Unemployment, Tottenham

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the relative position of Tottenham as regards unemployment levels; what assessment she has made of the extent of structural unemployment; and what consideration has been given to its designation as an assisted area.

Mr. McLoughlin: Meaningful comparisons of unemployment between areas with different sized work forces can be based only on unemployment rates. However, official unemployment rate estimates are not available at the level of parliamentary constituencies.

The criteria for designating assisted areas are published in the consultation paper "Regional Policy—Review of the Assisted Areas of Great Britain", which is available in the Library.

All areas are being considered in the assisted areas review, the results of which will be announced as early as possible taking account of the outcome of the coal review and after necessary clearance from the European Commission.

Training Places

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is her assessment of the impact on the providers of training places of her policy that training and enterprise councils and the Training, Enterprise and Education Directorate should withhold 30 per cent. until job placement has been secured.

Mr. McLoughlin: In 1993-94 the majority of TECs will receive between 25 and 40 per cent. of their training for work funding in the form of output-related payments for job placements and national vocational qulifications. Payment to providers is a matter for the TECs and they are not required to pass on to providers their funding arrangements with TEED.

National Training Partnership Ltd.

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a further statement on the establishment of the National Training Partnership Ltd. and the scope of its intended operations.

Mr. McLoughlin: The National Training Partnership Ltd. is a non profit-making company, limited by guarantee, whose board of directors is made up of individuals drawn from TECs, national organisations and independent bodies such as the CBI. Its primary business function is to provide a central contracting service to national providers of training and TECs. The company is currently involved in contract negotiations and plans to become fully operational in April 1993.

Women's Issues

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list the decisions of the ministerial sub-committee on women's issues which have been made known to Parliament and the public since it began its work.

Mr. McLoughlin: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to her on 5 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *310*.

Clean Bake Ltd.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when she expects her Department to pay the outstanding start-up grant to Clean Bake Ltd. of Southport and Skelmersdale.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

Although the terms of the offer of regional selective assistance to Clean Bake Ltd. provided that the second and final payment would not fall due until 19 August 1993, the Department exceptionally agreed to the applicant's request to submit an earlier claim for payment. A claim was received on 4 March, but without the necessary supporting documentation. When this is received, the Department will proceed without delay to consider

whether the normal criteria for payment have been met. Grant is usually payable on a fully documented and eligible claim within 30 working days of receipt.

HEALTH

Prescriptions

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost of prescriptions written by doctors who are *(a)* fund holders and *(b)* non-fund holders.

Dr. Mawhinney: The average net ingredient cost (NIC) per head of prescription items dispensed in 1991-92 is as follows:

	Net ingredient cost per head £
Non-fund holders	54·31
Fund holders	48·52

Notes:
1. NIC is the basic cost of drugs without the discount, VAT or container costs.
2. This information is derived from data provided by the Prescription Pricing Authority.

Sir Gerard Vaughan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average number of prescriptions written by family doctors per annum; and what is the average number of prescriptions written per patient, per annum by doctors who are members of a fund holding practice.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally. However, in 1991-92, the average number of prescription items dispensed per head was 8·6.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all medicines and treatments which are available on a prescription-only basis, whose cost price is lower than £4·25; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is contained in the drug tariff and the British National Formulary, copies of which are available in the Library.

Family Perspective and Life Cycle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which publication, speech or statement her Department has described how it takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of her Department.

Mr. Yeo: The role of the family is discussed in a range of departmental publications, speeches and statements. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health discussed the role of the family at length in the National Childrens Homes George Thomas Society lecture in 1992.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on how her Department takes account of the family perspective and the family life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of her Department.

Mr. Yeo: Family perspective and life cycle are considered in relation to a wide range of departmental activity, including: many aspects of the implementation of the Children Act 1989 and of care in the community policies; improving parental awareness of drug and alcohol abuse; grant aid for United Kingdom voluntary organisations providing help and support for families and children, and for the United Kingdom Association for the United Nations Year of the Family (scheduled for 1994) and support for family members in their role as carers. Statistics collected by the Department also reflect this emphasis, for example: statistics on local authority services to children identify family placements. The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys also collects information on a variety of aspects of family life; for example: the General Household Survey, the Family Resources Survey, the Labour Force Survey and the census.

Diabetics

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department has finished its evaluation of the case for providing injection pens and special needles for availability on general practitioner prescription for diabetics; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We continue to consider the financial case for authorising general practitioners to prescribe insulin injection pens and needles for diabetics. Their inclusion in the GP prescribable list must, like other new additions to the list, be subject to the availability of resources.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost of *(a)* conventional syringes and needles for the injection of insulin, *(b)* the cost of insulin, *(c)* the cost of insulin injection pen systems and *(d)* the cost of needles for injection pen systems; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Prescribable disposable syringes with needles cost £10·70 per 100. Disposable needles for use with syringes cost £2·20 per 100. A published cost is available for three makes of reusable pen injectors—£13·96, £18·40 and £23·86 each. The most commonly used pen needles cost £7·35 per 100, and retail at a recommended price of £9·80 per 100.

Insulin costs vary according to type and presentation. Insulin in vials for use with disposable syringes costs £0·67-£0·95 per ml; in cartridges £1·03-£1·13 per ml, for reusable pens and £1·80 per ml if the pen is disposable.

Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total number of ethnic minority and non-ethnic minority hospital doctors and general practitioners at the latest available date.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Consultant to Patient Ratio

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the consultant to patient ratio in each EC country.

Dr. Mawhinney: Data on the number of practising physicians per 1,000 of population for all countries in the EC are available from the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD). This covers all qualified doctors. Data specifically about consultants are not available.

The table gives the available information:

	Number
United Kingdom	1·4
France	2·6
Germany	2·9
Belgium	3·3
Netherlands	2·4
Italy	[1]1·3
Spain	3·6
Luxembourg	1·9
Portugal	2·7
Denmark	2·7
Greece	3·2
Ireland	1·5

[1] Hospital doctors only.

The OECD does not guarantee consistency of information between member states. The data are not directly comparable as training, career structure and nomenclature of medical staff and the organisational structure of health services vary greatly between the states.

Data on consultant-to-patient ratios in other EC countries are not available.

Nurses

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has on the number of nurses currently leaving nurse training schools who wish to serve in the national health service but find no post to go to; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Regional health authorities are responsible for ensuring that there are sufficient trained nurses to meet local requirements. With around 390,000 full-time nursing posts in the national health service in England, the matching of newly qualified nurses to vacancies is best handled at local level.

The Department does not routinely collect information on nursing vacancies or newly qualified nurses seeking employment.

Establishment and Finance Officer

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the qualifications by examination held by her Department's principal establishment and finance officer.

Mr. Sackville: I will write to the hon. Member.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by family health service authority in England *(a)* the number of dental care payments made and *(b)* the number of dental patients registered in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is given in the table.

	Estimated number of Dental Care Payments made—1991-92					*Number of patients registered 31 March 1992*		
FHSA	*Adult items of service*	*Child items of service*	*Estimated adult continuing care payments*[1]	*Estimated child capitation payments*[1]	*Total*	*Adults*	*Children*	*Total*
Cleveland	276,106	56,430	2,258,382	901,384	30,099,913	229,213	85,905	315,118
Cumbria	269,702	34,855	2,041,609	685,424	25,610,943	203,308	62,898	266,206
Durham	257,089	42,430	2,333,957	757,440	27,746,581	232,595	71,424	304,019
Northumberland	138,489	19,878	1,086,726	412,129	14,063,106	108,345	38,025	146,370
Gateshead	89,774	10,972	749,113	252,810	9,542,858	77,014	24,276	101,290
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	128,077	19,886	1,034,862	332,676	14,064,309	104,737	31,108	135,845
North Tyneside	96,218	11,517	790,857	262,493	10,038,337	80,133	24,774	104,907
South Tyneside	61,698	8,701	560,095	184,954	7,189,026	57,550	18,342	75,892
Sunderland	113,728	18,732	981,473	339,021	12,890,484	102,240	33,084	135,324
Humberside	317,783	63,663	3,373,413	1,231,311	42,100,030	336,053	115,281	451,334
North Yorkshire	428,967	43,407	3,326,025	1,058,349	40,958,062	318,673	96,343	415,016
Bradford	248,150	31,091	1,909,005	624,302	25,195,211	191,172	58,626	249,798
Calderdale	110,424	12,472	866,219	293,513	11,547,961	86,477	27,688	114,165
Kirklees	186,937	23,308	1,577,981	532,589	19,623,282	157,737	50,240	207,977
Leeds	418,067	56,463	3,170,625	1,054,618	42,534,112	310,929	97,022	407,951
Wakefield	141,589	25,468	1,201,004	434,597	15,959,154	120,963	40,854	161,817
Derbyshire	449,240	60,145	3,580,326	1,271,166	45,769,104	355,251	118,338	473,589
Leicestershire	475,150	62,972	3,647,635	1,301,579	45,184,275	358,302	120,094	478,396
Lincolnshire	317,209	33,023	2,518,570	818,750	28,509,819	247,045	75,120	322,165
Nottinghamshire	540,624	78,538	4,226,314	1,486,211	53,391,108	415,693	137,392	553,085
Barnsley	88,054	15,138	717,366	283,327	10,020,381	75,612	27,007	102,619
Doncaster	135,019	24,439	1,102,516	482,032	15,180,650	113,657	45,761	159,418
Rotherham	100,693	20,893	852,383	355,771	11,325,621	84,774	32,406	117,180
Sheffield	284,390	35,552	2,222,692	714,149	28,691,154	221,461	65,798	287,259
Cambridgeshire	366,111	40,708	2,720,922	992,660	34,237,413	266,149	90,802	356,951
Norfolk	448,303	43,045	3,332,811	1,266,549	41,856,407	330,179	107,759	437,938
Suffolk	420,708	41,152	3,064,745	1,002,392	37,526,389	295,243	90,759	386,002
Bedfordshire	207,416	23,906	1,666,796	542,290	23,100,552	176,270	53,071	229,341
Hertfordshire	506,844	72,325	3,957,412	1,624,633	58,573,425	401,642	150,469	552,111
Barnet	96,257	23,253	762,598	356,262	12,482,808	80,258	34,109	114,367
Brent and Harrow	181,557	36,696	1,567,166	526,423	24,605,059	165,113	51,074	216,187
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	244,653	32,413	2,077,167	609,433	34,266,868	227,086	61,058	288,144
Hillingdon	114,499	12,349	928,903	266,512	12,938,068	94,322	25,749	120,071

FHSA	Estimated number of Dental Care Payments made—1991-92					Number of patients registered 31 March 1992		
	Adult items of service	Child items of service	Estimated adult continuing care payments[1]	Estimated child capitation payments[1]	Total	Adults	Children	Total
Kensington, Westminster and Chelsea	114,807	9,951	956,851	179,584	16,587,234	107,346	18,444	125,790
Essex	665,284	94,600	5,493,058	2,075,240	75,868,173	558,786	194,210	752,996
Barking and Havering	148,117	21,165	1,206,954	430,768	17,848,177	124,950	40,798	165,748
Camden and Islington	156,825	10,899	1,315,667	261,986	20,682,080	145,231	26,215	171,446
City and East London	183,535	33,884	1,581,032	469,000	27,472,337	179,826	48,786	228,612
Enfield and Haringey	170,480	26,448	1,419,410	541,371	22,704,926	152,969	52,475	205,444
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	169,164	27,526	1,446,632	558,081	22,401,958	155,947	53,720	209,667
East Sussex	427,242	38,553	3,306,972	965,719	43,685,096	323,717	87,771	411,488
Kent	744,547	96,144	5,669,905	2,078,051	78,323,687	572,359	192,728	765,087
Greenwich and Bexley	186,316	31,186	1,446,118	560,410	22,033,639	152,406	54,562	206,968
Bromley	96,731	21,852	735,069	378,513	11,673,322	75,191	33,537	108,728
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	301,056	27,720	2,651,357	657,559	40,750,530	281,425	64,662	346,087
Surrey	544,417	63,117	4,017,106	1,510,572	55,961,553	400,541	138,681	539,222
West Sussex	447,295	49,230	3,207,955	1,155,259	42,863,962	314,166	106,065	420,231
Croydon	157,121	25,144	1,222,438	404,774	19,644,355	129,146	38,632	167,778
Kingston and Richmond	104,248	22,342	789,427	391,963	12,894,157	83,482	36,719	120,201
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	234,286	33,590	2,007,443	602,011	30,599,781	211,972	57,587	269,559
Dorset	460,225	37,158	3,267,024	993,878	40,680,508	320,241	91,996	412,237
Hampshire	954,260	83,816	6,989,684	2,333,108	89,046,671	682,960	213,617	896,577
Wiltshire	307,569	30,133	2,245,288	843,223	26,962,649	220,085	78,529	298,614
Isle of Wight	85,685	5,410	573,108	176,344	7,436,472	55,212	15,734	70,946
Berkshire	341,147	45,759	2,632,586	1,098,626	37,819,286	270,228	102,364	372,592
Buckinghamshire	303,404	37,000	2,351,843	1,042,737	32,500,019	236,777	96,962	333,739
Northamptonshire	279,654	31,717	2,184,967	836,334	27,496,376	219,323	77,577	296,900
Oxfordshire	289,872	32,031	2,108,898	859,875	28,924,106	211,650	78,612	290,262
Avon	613,002	63,441	4,449,310	1,515,796	55,764,637	434,462	137,747	572,209
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	262,771	26,810	2,141,735	710,372	26,154,938	212,731	65,795	278,526
Devon	633,749	63,506	4,992,863	1,609,815	61,507,050	484,243	146,954	631,197
Gloucestershire	355,705	31,500	2,570,817	844,853	31,974,693	252,190	77,116	329,306
Somerset	309,893	31,371	2,248,702	765,079	27,753,221	219,739	69,887	289,626
Hereford and Worcester	391,128	45,081	2,866,073	1,045,949	35,538,641	282,192	95,511	377,703
Shropshire	238,133	28,656	1,917,301	665,386	22,469,182	186,335	60,237	246,572
Staffordshire	497,744	68,789	3,889,168	1,528,116	49,744,297	389,920	141,970	531,890
Warwickshire	267,530	24,484	2,015,782	711,697	24,538,764	198,392	65,184	263,576
Birmingham	482,213	63,780	3,928,422	1,306,134	52,730,969	398,631	125,006	523,637
Coventry	140,645	18,151	1,324,696	371,733	17,196,550	132,337	34,920	167,257
Dudley	156,316	17,165	1,190,534	385,215	15,818,598	118,148	35,606	153,754
Sandwell	134,445	13,748	1,104,582	308,395	14,472,543	112,445	29,077	141,522
Solihull	93,780	11,775	701,674	263,202	10,091,105	70,498	24,650	95,148
Walsall	102,427	16,409	820,475	324,391	12,150,240	85,171	31,158	116,329
Wolverhampton	122,738	10,504	938,021	245,373	11,282,021	94,906	23,180	118,086
Cheshire	537,862	72,366	4,205,310	1,497,414	53,686,156	417,884	139,018	556,902
Liverpool	208,059	44,389	1,764,607	625,556	26,137,149	182,790	60,559	243,349
St. Helens and Knowsley	139,561	25,899	1,257,667	477,320	17,197,682	129,536	45,788	175,324
Sefton	158,045	19,688	1,241,704	463,012	16,568,357	124,666	42,762	167,428
Wirral	178,510	24,651	1,457,665	490,610	18,705,649	146,531	45,925	192,456
Lancashire	698,124	103,440	5,604,512	2,099,337	75,273,474	561,565	195,598	757,163
Bolton	134,227	18,262	1,018,596	399,893	13,334,049	99,666	36,965	136,631
Bury	93,211	12,913	713,442	270,684	10,123,593	70,222	24,780	95,002
Manchester	219,681	34,076	1,839,908	644,362	29,049,017	189,924	59,812	249,736
Oldham	103,779	18,206	800,495	355,464	11,860,279	80,770	33,239	114,009
Rochdale	91,643	14,046	797,740	314,615	10,427,777	79,537	29,747	109,284
Salford	105,766	18,273	900,558	437,441	13,602,036	91,388	36,552	127,940
Stockport	191,586	22,109	1,448,489	508,009	18,163,896	138,210	45,379	183,589
Tameside	101,041	19,443	802,127	341,879	11,586,466	81,554	32,454	114,008
Trafford	137,064	17,783	1,099,798	395,080	14,359,559	107,268	36,417	143,685
Wigan	139,909	25,906	1,207,737	501,392	16,368,778	121,056	46,553	167,609
ENGLAND	24,273,099	3,098,815	190,314,970	67,086,309	2,545,314,894	19,106,039	6,239,185	25,345,224

[1] Continuing care and capitation payments are paid monthly. This means that each dentist receives 12 such payments per year per patient registered.

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to the oral statement by the Home Secretary of 2 March, *Official Report*, columns 139-42, if she will list the measures to be taken within her Department in relation to secure accommodation, care and control.

Mr. Yeo: We are proposing to implement a range of measures to strengthen existing policies. These will include:

- issuing guidance on measures of control in secure and other forms of children's residential accommodation;
- ensuring that social services departments, working with others, take a consistent approach towards the control of juvenile offenders;
- reinforcing the social services inspectorate's role in upholding rigorous standards in all forms of secure accommodation, including the new secure training centres;
- amending regulations to enable private and voluntary providers to provide secure accommodation;
- charging the Central Council for the Education and Training of Social Workers with ensuring that issues of control and standards of supervision of offenders are properly addressed in the training of social workers.

We will implement our commitment that local authorities provide an additional 60 to 65 secure places by 1995-96 for juvenile remands.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library copies of the correspondence between her Department and the city of Newcastle upon Tyne director of social services about the provision of additional local authority secure unit accommodation.

Mr. Yeo: There has been no such correspondence.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the numbers and occupancy rate of local authority secure unit places in each region over the last five years; how many children were in such accommodation each year; and what was the cause of their admission.

Mr. Yeo: Information held centrally about local authority secure units is published in "Children accommodated in secure units during the year ending 31 March 1991, England". The information published includes numbers accommodated in each secure unit at 31 March in total and by the legal status on admission, the number of places at 31 March in each unit and occupancy levels. The number of children accommodated in each former social services inspectorate region is also published.

Information is not collected about the circumstances of admission, other than the legal status.

Copies of the publication are held in the Library.

NHS Trust Hospitals

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what purposes a hospital transferred to an NHS trust continues to be treated as Crown property.

Mr. Sackville: A hospital transferred to a national health service trust continues to be treated in the same way as Crown property in respect of developments notified to the local planning authority before 1 April 1991 whilst the trust has an interest in them; in respect of any building work approved before 1 April 1991 until such time as the work is completed; and in respect of tenancies entered into before 1 April 1991 in which the trust is landlord and which would otherwise be assured tenancies under the Housing Act 1988 or protected tenancies under the Rent Act 1977. NHS trusts are exempt from the need to carry insurance under the Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969 (equivalent arrangements under NHS (Injury Benefit) Regulations 1974 cover NHS staff); from the need for motor vehicle taxation under the Vehicles (Excise) Act 1971; from the need to effect third party insurance for ambulances under the Road Traffic Act 1988; from most taxation in line with the arrangements for other public bodies, and there are exemptions in certain circumstances in relation to licences under the Medicines Act 1968. In respect of section 48 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, NHS trusts are deemed to be Crown bodies in relation to material communicated to the Crown for a particular purpose in the course of public business, and thereby are entitled to copy and issue copies of the material to the public for that purpose without infringing copyright therein.

GP Patients

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by family health service authority in England, the number of patients registered with general medical practitioners in 1991-92.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested at 1 October 1991 is shown in the table.

	Numbers
Avon	996,744
Barking and Havering	386,641
Barnet	365,675
Barnsley	229,821
Bedfordshire	568,123
Berkshire	788,771
Birmingham	1,066,156
Bolton	268,742
Bradford	495,476
Brent and Harrow	388,944
Bromley	307,557
Buckinghamshire	662,534
Bury	186,179
Calderdale	197,575
Cambridgeshire	661,842
Camden and Islington	451,537
Cheshire	975,865
City and East London	690,802
Cleveland	573,720
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	478,820
Coventry	330,840
Croydon	335,033
Cumbria	496,765
Derbyshire	970,100
Devon	1,040,918
Doncaster	300,464
Dorset	658,142
Dudley	315,298
Durham	600,626
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	821,049
East Sussex	744,022
Enfield and Haringey	573,930
Essex	1,578,918
Gateshead	212,408
Gloucestershire	537,955
Greenwich and Bexley	439,871
Hampshire	1,588,935
Hereford and Worcester	678,320
Hertfordshire	1,050,750
Hillingdon	244,967
Humberside	883,672
Isle of Wight	128,281
Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster	422,713

	Numbers
Kent	1,559,873
Kingston and Richmond	329,576
Kirklees	366,653
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	851,622
Lancashire	1,427,797
Leeds	730,806
Leicestershire	914,793
Lincolnshire	595,419
Liverpool	503,204
Manchester	499,955
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	677,591
Newcastle	293,550
Norfolk	744,796
Northamptonshire	589,843
North Tyneside	193,148
Northumberland	305,017
North Yorkshire	719,661
Nottinghamshire	1,013,546
Oldham	199,256
Oxfordshire	584,002
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	476,785
Rochdale	205,954
Rotherham	246,799
Salford	244,249
Sandwell	318,230
Sefton	292,127
Sheffield	528,948
Shropshire	401,245
Solihull	222,639
Somerset	474,313
South Tyneside	160,807
St. Helens and Knowsley	363,875
Staffordshire	1,018,355
Stockport	296,313
Suffolk	640,394
Sunderland	294,236
Surrey	1,073,544
Tameside	218,044
Trafford	220,118
Wakefield	331,452
Walsall	260,976
Warwickshire	500,556
West Sussex	741,841
Wigan	307,621
Wiltshire	551,339
Wirral	343,470
Wolverhampton	256,827

NHS Superannuation Scheme

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider setting up arrangements whereby NHS employees transferred to non-NHS employers under planned schemes involving the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 can continue in membership of the NHS superannuation scheme.

Mr. Sackville: No. The national health service pension scheme is intended only for those people who are directly employed by NHS employing authorities.

Oral Contraceptives

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy that the present range of oral contraceptives will continue to be available to women free of charge under the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I have asked the advisory committee on national health service drugs to ensure that contraceptives to meet all real clinical needs will continue to be available free of charge on NHS prescription. There is no change in policy on family planning and we remain committed to the aim that the full range of NHS family planning services, however provided, should be appropriate, accessible and comprehensive.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the number of direct employees of each regional health authority; and what estimate she has made of the effect on staff requirements of the proposed reorganisation of the regional health authorities.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) on 4 March at column *221* about the numbers of regional health authorities' employees.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in her speech to the National Association of Health Authorities and Trusts (NAHAT) on 23 February that there would be a rigorous review of the manpower and functions of the intermediate tier; with the view that regions should typically employ a maximum of 200 people against the current average of 560.

Local Authority Homes

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to require local authority homes caring for the aged to meet the same registration standards as those met by the voluntary and private sector.

Mr. Yeo: All residential care homes, including those run by local authorities, are inspected regularly by reference to common inspection standards and criteria. We expect authorities to act on inspection reports which identify shortcomings in their own care homes.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the Government are taking to ensure that women users of mental health services have the choice of a woman worker.

Mr. Yeo: The "Health of the Nation" key area handbook on mental illness published in January advises purchasers that when considering local needs they should take into account women's particular concerns. This may include the choice of a female professional including a female key worker.

Music Therapy

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many full-time music therapists are currently employed in the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The number of full-time music therapists in England at 30 September 1991, the latest date for which information is available centrally, is 40 (rounded to the nearest ten whole number). Information relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Deployment of staff, including the number employed is a matter for trusts and directly managed units.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which local authorities use music therapy as a way of treating autistic children; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not held centrally. The Department is currently funding Professor Newson of Nottingham university to undertake an evaluation and comparative study of current interventions for children with autism.

Community Care

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a copy of the NHS management executive's report "Care for the Community in the 21st Century".

Mr. Yeo: The document referred to is not a national health service management executive document but a discussion paper which represents the output from a "learning set" of professionals drawn from the NHS and from local government and does not represent Government policy, nor the official view of any of the organisations who employ the members of the group.

The establishment of the set was supported through the resource management unit of the NHS management executive to enable an exchange of views between experienced senior people from different backgrounds but with a common interest in community and priority care services on a topic of their choice.

The "learning set" decided to distribute their piece of work widely within health organisations as a contribution to the debate on the future of community and priority care services, as one might with a piece of academic research. In the same spirit arrangements were made for distribution to Health Select Committee members and for copies to be available in the Library.

Medical Advisers

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many medical advisers employed by family health services authorities have had their performance assessed; and how many were deemed effective on the criterion laid down to assess their performance.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not held centrally. All family health service authorities (FHSAs) are expected to have medical advisers. Individual FHSAs are responsible for salary costs of medical advisers and for setting in train any procedures for monitoring their effectiveness.

Guy's and Lewisham Trust

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to publish the report of the inquiry into allegations about patient deaths at Guy's and Lewisham NHS trust; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The report was commissioned by the Guy's and Lewisham NHS trust and publication is a matter for it.

Hospital Charges

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce a system of *(a)* billing or *(b)* charging patients for any elements of their stay in NHS hospitals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have no such plans.

Children's Homes, Islington

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports she has received concerning the operation of children's homes in Islington; what proposals are being made for future changes; and what aspects she has asked the social services inspectorate to examine.

Mr. Yeo: An interim report by the independent inquiry into allegations of mismanagement in Islington's children's homes has been received by the Department. The inquiry team is being strengthened by the addition of a former director of social services. The inquiry will complete its investigation into the management and practice of the children's homes, the management of child care cases by the Islington neighbourhood services department and a range of associated personnel matters. The social services inspectorate will also conduct a full inspection of the children's homes service shortly.

Children in Care

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints she has received about children in care in England in the past year; and on how many occasions she has ordered a social services inspectorate inquiry.

Mr. Yeo: We have received a number of representations, some contain complaints but others seek advice or express opinions. The social services inspectorate does not undertake "inquiries" as such. However, on the instructions of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State it has undertaken an inspection of children's homes in Southwark and inspections will be carried out in Lambeth and Islington in the near future.

Air Pollution

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further research is planned on the causes of child asthma and bronchial conditions and its relationship to air pollution; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council (MRC) which receives its grant-in-aid from the Office of Science and Technology. As stated in my reply on 8 June, 1992, the MRC is sponsoring some research into factors contributing to the rise of asthma and has set up a working party to examine the aetiology of asthma under the chairmanship of Professor A. J. Newman Taylor. It is considering a range of possible contributory factors to current levels of asthma, including air pollution. The Department is represented on the working party and on the MRC committee on toxic hazards in the workplace and the environment, both of which will consider areas of need for further research.

In addition, the committee on the medical effects of air pollutants (COMEAP) which was established by the Chief Medical Officer last year has set up a sub-group on asthma which will make recommendations on research relating to asthma and air pollution.

Whittington Hospital

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the deficit of the Whittington hospital for 1991-92; what is the projected deficit for 1992-93; and how this will be paid.

Mr. Sackville: The balance on the audited income and expenditure account of the Whittington hospital for 1991-92 showed a breakeven operating position. This was after a temporary increase of £600,000 in the cash limit from the regional health authority (RHA) under the brokerage arrangements operated by them.

The projected unaudited net income and expenditure deficit for 1992-93 is presently £70,000 after regional support. The RHA is currently in discussion with the hospital to identify ways in which the deficit can be covered.

Primary and Community Care

Ms Coffey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications for grant for the commissioning of primary and community care under the new purchasing arrangements for general practitioner fund holders have been made *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in Stockport; how much each individual application has been for; and which applications have been granted.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* General practitioner fund holders do not apply for grants for primary and community care.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what areas of food production within the United Kingdom currently fall *(a)* within and *(b)* outside of arrangments made under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Curry: Within the United Kingdom, all primary food production falls within the common agricultural policy with the exception of potatoes and honey. A Commission proposal to bring potatoes within the CAP is currently under discussion.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Curry: The information is as follows:

	£
1991-92	89,014·54
[1]1992-93	53,884·91

[1] To 31 January.

Bananas

Sir Donald Thompson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom's traditional suppliers in the Commonwealth Caribbean on the agreement in the Agriculture Council on the Community arrangements for bananas.

Mr. Curry: The Agriculture Council agreed, at its meeting in February, a regulation setting up harmonised arrangements for the Community banana market. The negotiations were long and difficult but the final text of the regulation reflects the agreement reached at the December Council on the basis of a United Kingdom presidency compromise.

The new arrangements needed to satisfy a number of objectives: completion of the single market in bananas, compatibility with GATT, the needs of consumers and the Community's legal and moral obligations to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries under the Lomé convention. Until now, those obligations have been met by the United Kingdom and a small number of member states and we were careful, during the negotiations, not to lose sight of the crucial importance of the banana industry to our traditional suppliers in the Commonwealth Caribbean. The common organisation of the EC banana market which will now be introduced will share the burden of the Lomé obligations among all 12 member states. The agreement will ensure that banana producers in the Caribbean can maintain a viable industry and it has been widely welcomed by them.

Ministers' Homes

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been spent from public funds on approved work on Ministers' private residences arising from their ministerial duties other than in respect of security.

Mr. Gummer: None, but I refer the hon. Member to the Second Report of the Committee on Members' Interests —HC 469, Session 1992-93.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Young People (Benefits)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many 16 and 17-year-olds in Walthamstow are in receipt of benefits; and what percentage this is of the age group.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

Family Perspective and Life Cycle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in which publication, speech or statement his Department has described how it takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department;

(2) if he will make a statement on how his Department takes account of the family perspective and the family life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department.

Mr. Burt: A substantial proportion of the activities of the Department of Social Security is aimed at supporting

families, through the benefit system and through the proposed child support arrangements. Numerous speeches and statements have set out the Department's views on the family perspective and the needs of families featured prominently in the deliberations leading up to the 1988 social security reforms, as well as the 1990 White Paper "Children Come First".

The structure of the benefit system now provides two clear and distinct paths for the provision of help to families with the cost of bringing up children. The first is to provide help for families generally, while the second is to provide extra help for low-income families, both in and out of work.

Child benefit is designed to meet the needs of families generally and the Government remain committed to the principle of giving financial support to those who bear the extra responsibility of bringing up children.

The introduction of income support to replace supplementary benefit enabled us to tackle many of the deficiencies and complexities of the old system. Through the system of personal allowances and premiums reflecting the needs of particular client groups, such as the family premium for families with children, we are now able to direct help specifically towards low-income families not in work.

The cornerstone of our approach to help low-income working families is family credit. This now provides a tax-free weekly cash payment to boost the incomes of almost 450,000 working families, payable in nearly every case to the mother. Family credit is designed to:

(i) provide extra support to these families in accordance with their needs and ensure as far as possible that they are better off in work;

(ii) ensure that those who are able to work harder or for longer hours do not lose all or more of the extra money earned because of the withdrawal of income related benefits.

In our manifesto we promised:

"We will set up a new Family Credit telephone advice service to support working families".

The new family credit helpline will be set up from April 1993 to help potential, as well as existing customers.

Families both in and out of work qualify for housing benefit and for community charge benefit, to be replaced next month by the council tax benefit. Both benefits, like income support, feature a family premium and a structure of allowances to take account of family needs.

There is a need for social policy to reinforce and encourage parents' acceptance of their responsibility for providing for their children. Our new Child Support Agency, to be launched on 5 April, will take over the task of assessing, collecting and enforcing payments of child maintenance. By setting up a purpose-built agency charged with all aspects of maintenance, rather than the current fragmented system, we expect to see big gains in the extent to which absent parents contribute towards the support of their children. The new system should also bring greater predictability and regularity in the payment of maintenance—so that maintenance will contribute to creating a stable basis of income on which parents caring for children can build.

The Department also commissions research to analyse the situation of single people and families receiving benefit of various stages of life. All benefit statistics give a breakdown of the numbers and characteristics of the people receiving them. The departmental report—Cm 2213, February 1993—provides an analysis of social security expenditure and includes a bibliography; a copy is in the Library.

Fire, Banbury Office

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many claimants' records were destroyed in the fire at his Department's office in Banbury, Oxfordshire; and if he will make a statement as to the probable cause of the fire;

(2) what action he is taking to see that claimants whose records were destroyed in the fire at his Department's office in Banbury, Oxfordshire, do not suffer undue delay in having their claims processed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: There was no fire at the Department's premises in Banbury—media reports were misleading. It is understood that the fire in question was at the local authority social services office in Banbury.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by year for the last five years *(a)* the number of persons employed by grade and *(b)* the annual cost of (i) the disablement benefit section, (ii) the contributory benefits (appeals) section, (iii) the social fund section, (iv) the income support (appeals) section, (v) the income support section, to cover all aspects of income support including housing benefit, (vi) the section dealing with income support for persons aged 16 and 17 years, (vii) the section dealing with direct payments to third parties in respect of fuel costs etc., (viii) the Child Support Agency, (ix) the Contributions Agency section, (x) the fraud and special investigations section and (xi) the reception area of his Department's offices in Castle house, Doncaster.

Mr. Burt: Figures are available only for 1991-92 and 1992-93 since the Benefits Agency was formed except for details from the Contributions Agency where 1990-91 information is held.

Such information as is available is tabled.

Staffing and costs of Doncaster district office Department of Social Security 1991-92

Benefit	*Grades LO1*	*LO2*	*AA*	*Cost (£)*
Disablement	1	3	0·5	53,000
Contributions (Appeals)	1	0	0	15,000
Social Fund	12	9	5	327,000
Income Support (Appeals)	1·5	0	0	23,000
Income Support Section	4·5	18	6	322,000
Income Support 16-17 year olds	0·5	0	0	8,000
Direct Payments	1	2·5	0	43,000
Child Support Unit	5	3	0	110,000
Contributions Agency	3	2·5	0	74,000
(90-91 details available)	3	3	1	88,000
Fraud and Special Investigation	4	1	1	81,000
Reception	1	7·5	0	99,000

Note: All salary costs at 1991-92 rates.

Staffing and costs of Doncaster district office Department of Social Security 1992-93

Benefit	*LO1*	*Grades LO2*	*AA*	*Cost (£)*
Disablement	1	3	0·5	54,000
Contributions (Appeals)	1	0	0	16,000
Social Fund	10	12	5	331,000
Income Support (Appeals)	1·5	0	0	24,000
Income Support Section	5·5	20·5	6·5	369,000
Income Support 16-17 year olds	0·5	0	0	8,000
Direct Payments	1	6	1	91,801
Child Support Unit	4	3	0	97,382
Contributions Agency	3	2·6	0	77,000
Fraud and Special Investigation	4	1	1	82,000
Reception	1	9·5	0	125,000

Note: All salary costs at 1992-93 rates.

Unemployment Benefit

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will abolish the regulation by which unemployment benefit is reduced by 10p for every 10p over £35 received in occupational pension for those aged 55 years.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will set out the conditions in which persons over the age of 55 years lose unemployment benefit arising from interaction with pension entitlement.

Mr. Burt: Unemployment benefit is reduced by 10p for every 10p by which an occupational or personal pension payable to a claimant aged 55 years or over exceeds £35 a week.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security whether he intends to review the benefit rules as set out in NI 230 in so far as they discriminate against persons aged over 55 years; how many persons are in receipt of a reduced level of unemployment benefit arising out of the rules; and what is the reason for the different treatment of persons in receipt of unemployment benefit arising out of the rules.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to revise these rules.

The number of people whose entitlement to unemployment benefit is reduced or extinguished due to the receipt of an occupational or personal pension is 26,400.

The abatement rules are in line with the Government's policy to target help to those in greatest need, particularly those who do not have the support which an occupational or personal pension provides. The reduction of the age threshold from 60 to 55 years was made to reflect changing patterns of retirement. Since the introduction of the original rule, increasing numbers of people have been retiring before the age of 60 with an occupational or personal pension.

Source: Half Yearly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants, May 1992.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many people lose all their entitlement to unemployment benefit because of an occupational pension; and are such people still counted on the official register of number of unemployed;

(2) how many people lose some amount of unemployment benefit because of receipt of an occupational pension.

Mr. Burt: The number of people who lose some amount of unemployment benefit because of receipt of an occupational or personal pension is 26,400. In 9,200 of these cases entitlement to unemployment benefit is extinguished.

Source: Half Yearly Analysis of Unemployed Claimants: May 1992.

People whose entitlement to unemployment benefit is extinguished due to the receipt of an occupational or personal pension may continue to register unemployed for the purpose of obtaining national insurance credits. Those who do so will be included in the unemployment statistics. No figures are held for people who decide not to pursue a claim for credits and they could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will raise the age at which receipt of occupational pension affects unemployment benefit from 55 to 60 years of age.

Mr. Burt: We have no plans to do so.

Income Support

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, columns *201-2*, if he will *(a)* make it his policy to end the arrangements on the deprivation of capital for benefit purposes and *(b)* place in the Library of the House a copy of the adjudication officers' guide; and when benefits agency officers were last reminded of the provision of existing legislation and guidance on this matter.

Mr. Burt: There are no plans to change the present rules. Copies of the adjudication officers guide have been in the Library for some time. I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the most recent reminder to agency staff was issued in January 1993.

ENVIRONMENT

Carbon Dioxide Emissions

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has, following the United Kingdom's commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emission levels in 2000 to the level in 1990 for the emission levels beyond 2000.

Mr. Maclean: The United Nations framework convention on climate change contains provision for further commitments to be agreed for limiting greenhouse gas emissions in the period beyond 2000. The commitments in the convention must be reviewed at the first meeting of the convention's conference of parties, again not later than the end of 1998, and periodically thereafter.

For the present, the Government have no specific objectives for emissions beyond 2000. However measures taken as part of the programme to limit emissions by 2000 are likely to have a continuing effect on emissions thereafter. And, given that there is likely to be a continuing

need to restrain emissions, the Government are looking at the options for containing emissions in the longer term and are carrying out research where necessary. Interim advice has already been given to local planning authorities on how land use planning might influence the need to travel and choice of travel mode, and hence affect CO_2 emissions from transport in the longer term.

Packaging Directive

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to secure amendments to the EC directive on packaging and packaging waste in order to *(a)* set targets for reducing the overall amount of packaging used and *(b)* introduce measures to increase the use of refillable containers.

Mr. Maclean: We believe that limiting the amount of packaging to be produced in the Community would be an unacceptable constraint on economic growth. Such a limit would be very difficult to enforce and is not necessary to achieve the environmental objective of reducing the amount of packaging waste going to final disposal. We believe the approach proposed by the Commission of setting targets for the recovery and recycling of packaging waste is more appropriate. We will explore in negotiation whether those targets can reflect the contribution made by refillable containers without creating barriers to trade or competition.

Catalytic Converters

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent the projected decrease in emissions of nitrogen dioxide resulting from the introduction of catalytic converters takes into account the effects of cold starts and short journeys within urban areas; and what are the implications of these factors for future urban air quality.

Mr. Maclean: Projections of emissions of oxides of nitrogen published by Warren Spring Laboratory take account both of the introduction of catalytic converters on cars and of the fact that these do not control emissions effectively until the engine has warmed up. The introduction of catalytic converters is expected to result in a decline both in emissions of oxides of nitrogen and in average concentrations of nitrogen dioxide. However, peak wintertime concentrations of nitrogen dioxide in urban areas will be less affected because of the preponderance of short car journeys and of low ambient temperatures in winter.

Energy Efficiency Office

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the publicity budget of the Energy Efficiency Office *(a)* for 1986-87 and *(b)* for 1992-93, expressed in constant money terms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The Energy Efficiency Office's publicity outturn in 1986-87 was some £18 million in 1992 prices, and the estimated outturn for 1992-93 is £8 million. The higher level of expenditure on publicity in 1986-87 reflects the short-term "Monergy" campaign undertaken at that time to raise general awareness of the economic benefits of energy efficiency. The EEO continues to run general publicity campaigns such as "Helping the Earth Begins at Home", but in addition is now giving greater emphasis to helping specific groups of consumers make energy efficiency improvements by providing them with advice and information.

Noise Abatement Zones

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what action he now proposes to take arising from the Building Research Establishment's report on noise abatement zones; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received on noise abatement zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: My Department is currently considering the findings of a review of noise abatement zones in England and Wales 1976-1992. We will announce our conclusions in due course. We have received no representations on noise abatement zones, other than from the hon. Member.

Pollution

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public complaints, broken down by region and by county, have been received in each of the last four years by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution; and if he will provide the same information identified for each installation complained about.

Mr. Maclean: The information can be provided in the form requested only at disproportionate cost. However, the figures for public complaints against processes are included in the HMIP annual report which is placed in the House of Commons Library.

Landfill Sites

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many landfill sites in the United Kingdom have gas control plant with flarestacks; how many of these have licence conditions incorporating the recommendations for combustion temperature contained in waste management paper 27; and what action has been taken against site operators who do not maintain flarestacks to a satisfactory standard.

Mr. Maclean: Waste disposal licensing is the responsibility of the waste regulation authorities and these authorities maintain public records of licensed activities in their areas. The information is not held centrally.

In considering applications for licences, suitable conditions are set by authorities to ensure that operations do not lead to pollution or danger to public health. Conditions are set on a site specific basis taking account of the guidance given by the Department in waste management papers. Waste management paper 27 explains that all landfill sites should be considered as having the potential to generate landfill gas and all should be monitored for gas evolution and migration. Sites should, where necessary, have control systems installed to prevent uncontrolled gas migration.

Authorities have a duty to monitor activities at licensed sites. They are able to revoke licences if licence holders fail to comply with the conditions attached to the licence and take appropriate remedial action if a hazard arises.

Radioactive Discharges

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has about the levels of radioactive discharges into *(a)* the sewerage system and *(b)* rivers, in the United Kingdom, for each of the last three years.

Mr. Maclean: Discharges of radioactive waste to the public sewerage system and to watercourses are strictly regulated by means of authorisations issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP. Authorisations are issued only after a careful radiological assessment and impose strict conditions and maximum activity limits which ensure proper protection from such disposals for all members of the public, including sewer workers. Discharges in excess of the set limits would be an offence and could render an operator liable to prosecution.

Results of a research study conducted on behalf of HMIP by the National Radiological Protection Board into the exposure of sewer workers associated with radioactive discarges from hospitals was published in June 1991. It found that doses of radiation to those sewer workers with long exposure near to hospital discharge points are approximately 100th that of natural background levels.

Further research conducted on behalf of HMIP by St Bartholomew's medical college into the levels of Iodine 125 in drinking water show that actual radiation exposure to the public is less than 100th that of natural background levels. I-125 is a principal component of discharges from hospitals. Both these reports (DOE/HMIP/RR/91/030 and 031) are in the Library of the House. The studies form part of an HMIP-commissioned programme of research into the environmental behaviour of radionuclides.

A programme for monitoring radioactivity in public water supplies in England and Wales has operated for many years. Results from this programme are published in the Department's "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" a copy of which is in the Library. Selective monitoring of private water supplies is also undertaken under contract to this Department.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Howard: None of the projects in my Department's market-testing programme which involves exposing in-house functions to competition has yet reached the stage where a contract or service level agreement has been awarded. In-house bids are being encouraged in every case.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the formula for arriving at the housing element allowed to local authorities under the housing subsidy application; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: My Department publishes, annually, two general determinations setting out how each local housing authority's entitlement to housing revenue account subsidy for the forthcoming financial year shall be calculated. These determinations are placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The most recent determinations were published on 17 December 1992 in respect of the financial year starting on 1 April 1993.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the rate of inflation included in the housing element of the housing subsidy *(a)* nationally and *(b)* for Wakefield district council.

Mr. Baldry: Our policy is to target housing revenue account subsidy according to the relative needs of each authority. This is done by targeting the two main components of the housing element of the subsidy calculation, guidelines rents and management and maintenance allowances, according to the relative value and characteristics retrospectively of each authority's stock. For 1993-94, we are increasing guideline rents nationally by 7·75 per cent.—5 per cent. above the underlying rate of general inflation—compared with a 7·1 per cent. increase for Wakefield district council. Management and maintenance allowances are to be increased by 3·75 per cent. overall but Wakefield district council's allowance will be increased by only 1·25 per cent. because the council's existing allowance is already very close to our assessment of the council's relative need to spend.

House Conditions Survey

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the reasons for the delay in publishing the English house conditions survey.

Sir George Young: There is no delay. The data are being analysed now and the results will be published as soon as they are available.

Housing Association Lettings

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total of new lettings made by housing associations in England for each year since 1979; and what proportion of new lettings were made to tenants receiving housing benefits.

Sir George Young: Information on the number of housing association lettings in England is available from 1988-89, and information on lettings to tenants qualifying for housing benefit from 1990-91. The information is as follows:

New lettings[1] made by housing associations (England)

	Number
1988-89	56,800
1989-90	60,400
1990-91	62,600
1991-92	70,500

Source: Housing Corporation HAR10/1 returns.

[1] Excludes transfers within an association and accommodation in almshouses and Abbeyfields.

Proportion of new lettings[1] to tenants qualifying for housing benefit (England)

	Per cent
1990-91	56
1991-92	64

Source: National Federation of Housing Associations "CORE" database.
[1] Excludes transfers within an association and accommodation in almshouses and Abbeyfields.

Leighton Hospital Incinerator

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the timetable for the construction of additional road facilities to accommodate waste transport to the proposed waste incinerator at Leighton hospital in Crewe.

Mr. Maclean: This is a matter for Cheshire county council.

Hazardous Substances

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the Planning (Hazardous Substances) Act 1990 and the 1992 regulations made under it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: This legislation came into force in June 1992. My Department has been closely monitoring the operation of the new controls since then and will continue to do so. We will shortly be asking local authorities to provide detailed information about all applications for hazardous substances consent received up to 31 March this year.

Service Pesonnel (Housing)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with local authority associations concerning the housing needs of personnel leaving the services; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Advice to local authorities about housing for people leaving the services is given in Department of the Environment circular 54/75 "Housing for Ex-Servicemen and Ex-Service Women". Much of that guidance remains relevant, but the circular needs updating to reflect, for example, the third—1991—edition of the homelessness code of guidance, Ministry of Defence housing innitiatives announced in 1992, and the increasing role of housing associations in the provision of social housing. We will consult the local authority associations and other interested parties on the draft text of a replacement circular shortly.

Northumbria Water Laboratory

Mr. Boyes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will intervene to halt the transfer of the Northumbria River Authority laboratory from Washington to Leeds.

Mr. Maclean: This is a management matter for the National Rivers Authority.

Satellite Dishes

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to change the planning laws concerning the number of satellite dishes allowed on blocks of flats without planning permission; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Revised planning rules affecting satellite TV dishes on flats came into force in July 1991, following a review. When the 1991 rules were introduced, the Minister for Housing and Planning made clear that they would be considered again should the Independent Television Commission license another significant direct broadcasting by satellite provider or should another major satellite service emerge that cannot be received by means of an Astra aerial.

Housing Association Grant

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations which have made representations to him concerning the effect of reduced housing association grant rates on rent levels for housing association tenants; and if he will give the proportion of these organisations which expressed concern about increased rent levels.

Sir George Young: Ministers receive representations throughout the year on rates of housing association grant and rent levels, and on the relationship between the two. There is no analysis available of which bodies have made what type of representation, but the organisations which have expressed views on this subject include the National Federation of Housing Associations and other national bodies, as well as individual housing associations and local bodies.

Council Homes

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the first-year revenue cost in England of providing a two-bedroomed council home for rent

Sir George Young: The majority of new house building for rent is undertaken by housing associations and consequently the information requested by the hon. Member is not collected by my Department.

National Parks

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the future funding and organisation of the national parks.

Mr. Maclean: Our policy statement on the national parks, published in January 1992, promised legislation to create independent authorities for the eight national parks in England and Wales currently run as county council committees. I fully recognise the importance of introducing national park legislation at the earliest opportunity and I have repeatedly said that we will do so. We cannot commit ourselves to a specific level of resources for the parks, but I believe that our record of funding should give confidence that the new authorities will be able to discharge their various responsibilities.

Dumplington Development

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, column *189*, on the proposed development at Dumplington, when he now proposes to announce his decision to the House.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State's decision to grant planning permission for the development of a sub-regional shopping centre at Dumplington, was issued on Thursday, 4 March.

"Helping the Earth Begins at Home"

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many telephone complaints have been received about the "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" campaign.

Mr. Maclean: Since the "Helping the Earth Begins at Home" campaign began in November 1991, one telephone complaint has been received by my Department.

Homeless People (Deaths)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless people have been found dead on the streets of London in each of the past five years.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally.

Assisted Areas

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list in each year *(a)* at year-by-year prices and *(b)* at current prices the total amount of moneys made available to the travel-to-work areas included in the assisted areas map since 1984.

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Monday 8 March, *Official Report*, column *412*.

Local Authority Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take against those local authorities whose direct labour organisations made significant financial losses in 1990-91.

Mr. Robin Squire: Statutory notices under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988 were served on 35 local authorities between July and September of last year in respect of financial failure in 1990-91. I announced on 2 December 1992, *Official Report*, column *209* and 4 March, *Official Report*, column *265* decisions in respect of 26 authorities. The Secretary of State has now considered the responses of a further nine authorities on whom notices were served on 11 September 1992.

He has decided to take no further action in respect of financial failure in 1990-91 by Boston borough council —highways and sewerage: Carlisle city council—new construction in excess of £50,000 and highways and sewerage; Chorley borough council—highways and sewerage; Gosport borough council—building maintenance; London borough of Newham—new construction of less than £50,000 and building maintenance; Newcastle upon Tyne city council—building maintenance; Southend on Sea borough council—highways and sewerage; and London borough of Southwark—building maintenance.

In all these cases the authority:

(a) appears to have successfully responded to the financial losses incurred in 1990-91, and has either achieved a surplus in 1991-92, or expects to achieve the appropriate financial objective in 1992-93, or,

(b) has re-tendered or intends to re-tender very shortly the work in question.

Derelict Land Survey

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the next derelict land survey in England to be carried out.

Mr. Redwood: The next derelict land survey is being undertaken this year, with a base date of 1 April. The survey forms were sent out to the local authorities in England in February and I hope that they will all be able to take part. The previous survey was in 1988 and now we need more up-to-date information to enable the Department to allocate grant for land reclamation and to provide a starting point for the urban regeneration agency's work. The survey is being managed for the Department by the consultants, Arup Economics and Planning, and the results of the survey should be published in the summer of 1994.

Street Lighting

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average emission of lighting above horizontal, as a proportion of output in *(a)* trunk road lighting and *(b)* other street lighting; if he will estimate the amount of electricity used per annum in lighting above horizontal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

About 12 per cent. of the light output from most road lighting lanterns on trunk and other roads is reflected upwards from the road surface. It is this reflected light which provides safe visual conditions for drivers. It is estimated that about 2 per cent. of the light output from lanterns is reflected upwards by impurities in the air before it reaches the road surface and about the same proportion goes directly upwards.

It is estimated that some 2,000 million units of electricity are used each year for road lighting in Great Britain.

British Waterways Bill

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of the British Waterways Bill on commercial shipping.

(2) if he will list the British Waterways docks planned to be closed as a result of the Waterways Bill.

Mr. Maclean: *[pursuant to his reply, 23 February 1993 c. 524]:* British Waterways now advises me that a small amount of commercial shipping continues to use Weston Point docks for discharging and loading at facilities leased by a third party. I, and British Waterways Board, apologise for the error in earlier reply. It remains the case that the British Waterways Bill does not prevent the future operation of the docks for commercial traffic.

Countryside Commission

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of members of the Countryside Commission, when they were appointed, the number of meetings held, the number of meetings attended by each member and when each term of office is to be completed.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Commissioner	*Date appointed*	*Date current term expires*	*Number of meetings held in past 12 months*	*Number of meetings attended in past 12 months*
Sir John Johnson (Chairman)	1 April 1991	30 March 1994	6	6
Antony Jarvis	1 July 1986	30 June 1993	6	6
Professor Bryn Green	8 May 1984	30 June 1993	6	6
Earl of Swinton	1 July 1987	30 June 1993	6	6
Rachel Thomas	1 October 1987	30 June 1993	6	6
David Fletcher	1 July 1988	30 June 1994	6	6
Sarah Ward	1 August 1991	30 June 1994	6	6
Sir Richard Carew Pole	26 September 1991	30 June 1994	6	5
Professor Allen Patmore	22 September 1992	30 June 1995	6	[1]3

[1] Professor Patmore has attended the three Commission meetings held since his appointment.

Enterprise Zone, Barrow

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards establishing an enterprise zone in the Barrow in Furness travel-to-work area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* I am aware of the case made by Barrow in Furness for a new enterprise zone. It remains Government policy that enterprise zones should be designated only in exceptional circumstances and where they can be most effectively deployed. Decisions on future designations of enterprise zones await the outcome of a review of the assisted areas map now being undertaken by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 11 March 1993

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many individual movements of plutonium were involved in post-irradiation examination experiments at Berkeley nuclear laboratories and Winfrith nuclear research establishment to which reference is made in note (2) to section A of his departmental press release P/93/51 of 4 February on annual plutonium production and stockpile figures.

Mr. Eggar: Dispatches for post-irradiation examination involve movements of spent fuel, details of which are an operational matter for the owner of the fuel in question.

Technology Imports

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals to place a duty on those importing technology into the United Kingdom to provide environmental impact information as part of the import licensing procedure.

Mr. Needham: No.

Tractors and Earth-moving Equipment

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the import, export, balance of payments and import penetration figures for tractors and earth-moving equipment since 1987.

Mr. Needham: Information on trade in, and sales of, earth-moving equipment is regularly published in the Central Statistical Office's business monitor PAS3254, copies of which are available in the Library of the House. However, because product sales information is collected only from large firms, it is not comparable with the trade data and reliable import penetration figures cannot therefore be derived.

Anthracite

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the annual production of anthracite in each year since 1985; and what has been the cost of its production in 1992 prices.

Mr. Eggar: The annual production of anthracite in the United Kingdom since 1985 was:

	Thousand tonnes
1985	2,142
1986	1,985
1987	2,091
1988	1,798
1989	2,060
1990	1,945
1991	1,864
1992	2,029

Information on the cost of anthracite production is not held centrally.

Coal Industry

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the average cost of British Coal's production in each year since 1985 in 1992 prices.

Mr. Eggar: Information on British Coal's production costs are published in British Coal Corporation's report and accounts. Figures in 1992 prices are as follows:

Financial year	*Cost per tonne*[2]	
	Deep-mined	*Opencast*
[1]1985-86	66·95	40·85
1986-87	57·52	37·48
1987-88	56·07	35·70
1988-89	48·91	33·75
1989-90	50·59	33·99
1990-91	45·45	35·09
[3]1991-92	42·13	33·99

[1] Figures for 1985-86 exclude release of 1984-85 provisions for strike recovery costs.
[2] Cash figures adjusted to 1992 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.
[3] The GDP deflator for 1992 has been estimated.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the estimated percentage market share of British Coal in *(a)* the industrial steam coal market, *(b)* the domestic coal market, and *(c)* the market for electricity generation in Britain during 1992.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal's percentage shares of the respective coal markets during 1992 are estimated at 85 per cent. for electricity generation, 45 per cent. for industrial steam coal and 75 per cent. for domestic coal.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much coal has been produced by the private sector of *(a)* opencast and *(b)* deep mined, annually since 1987; and what proportion of private sector production was sold to (i) the power generators, (ii) industrial users, (iii) the domestic home market and (iv) abroad.

Mr. Eggar: The amount of opencast and deep-mined coal produced by private sector licensed mines since 1987 was:

Thousand tonnes

	Opencast	*Deep mined*
1987	1,155	855
1988	1,130	875
1989	1,093	1,013
1990	1,109	1,006
1991	1,987	1,102
[1]1992	2,592	1,099

[1] Provisional.

About a tenth of this coal is sold back to British Coal, while most of the remainder is sold for power generation. Small amounts are also sold to domestic and industrial users or exported.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total tonnage of coal used for electricity generation in Britain in each year since 1987; and how much of this was obtained from *(a)* opencast coal mining, *(b)* Britain's deep mines and *(c)* imports of foreign coal.

Mr. Eggar: The amounts of coal used for electricity generation from 1987 were:

Million tonnes

	Major generating companies				*Other generating companies*[1]	*Overall total*
	Open-cast	*Deep mined*	*Imports*	*Total*		
1987	12·2	67·8	1·4	81·4	6·6	88·0
1988	10·2	65·2	2·0	77·4	6·9	84·2
1989	10·0	65·3	2·0	77·3	5·3	82·6
1990	11·3	62·4	4·7	78·4	6·1	84·5
1991	11·9	61·9	7·3	81·1	2·9	84·0
1992[2]	10·3	57·1	7·6	75·0	4·0	79·0

[1] Information on the source of coal used by other generating companies is not collected centrally.
[2] Provisional.

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the annual change in labour productivity, output per man shift, in British Coal's deep mine pits since 1985.

Mr. Eggar: The annual change in labour productivity, as measured by average output per man shift worked, in British Coal's deep mines since 1985 are as follows:

	Percentage change over previous year	*Output per manshift, tonnes*
1985	11	2·49
1986	27	3·15
1987	14	3·59
1988	11	3·97
1989	9	4·33
1990	5	4·53
1991	13	5·11
[1]1992	18	6·01

[1] Provisional.
Source: Table 7 in Energy Trends.

Coal Exports

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the estimated annual tonnages of British Coal exports to *(a)* France, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* Ireland, *(d)* Spain, *(e)* the European Community total and *(f)* total world wide during 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Eggar: The figures requested are given in the table:

Thousand tonnes

	1990	*1991*	*1992*[1]
France	276	327	155
Germany	282	274	63
Ireland	198	154	107
Spain	131	207	52
European Communities[2]	1,739	1,390	614
All countries	2,533	1,672	668

[1] Provisional
[2] Including France, Germany, Spain and Ireland
Source: British Coal

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will request Her Majesty's chief inspector of nuclear installations to investigate the problems discovered in the status nuclear safety computer system developed for Nuclear Electric's Magnox plants.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond) on 10 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *582*.

AEA Technology

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of the contracts by AEA Technology *(a)* completed and *(b)* currently under negotiation with foreign companies or other nuclear organisations for the reprocessing or storage of materials, test reactor and research reactor nuclear fuels at Dounreay; and what is the total value of this business to AEA Technology to date.

Mr. Eggar: These are commercial matters for the AEA.

Renewable Energy

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department commenced formal discussions with the European Commission on the question of support for renewable energy beyond 1998.

Mr. Eggar: My Department first raised this matter with the Commission in autumn 1991.

Bio-diesel Fuel

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much subsidy was given to companies producing bio-diesel fuel in the United Kingdom in the last year; what information he has as to subsidies given by other EC Governments to companies producing bio-diesel fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom Presidency of the European Community secured agreement to directive 92/81/EEC on the harmonisation of the structures of excise duties on mineral oils on 19 October 1992. This directive provides that member states may apply total or partial exemptions or reductions in the rate of duty to mineral oils used under fiscal control, inter alia, in the field of pilot projects for the technological development of more environmentally friendly products and in particular in relation to fuels from renewable resources. No such exemptions have so far been granted in the United Kingdom and data concerning other member states are not recorded in the United Kingdom.

Electricity Imports

Mr. Tipping: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what payments have been made since 1990 on imports of electricity from France as an equivalent to the fossil fuel levy.

Mr. Eggar: This is a commercial matter for those regional electricity companies that have contracts requiring them to make such payments to Electricité de France.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Mr. Denham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what specific contributions the United Kingdom has made to discussions in the OECD joint sessions of trade and environment experts; what further contributions are planned; and what plans exist for the issue of guidelines on the use of trade and environment policies.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* The United Kingdom participates actively in the work of the OECD trade and environment group, in close collaboration with the European Commission and other EC member states. The Government attach high priority to the development of criteria, including possible OECD guidelines, to govern the proper use of trade measures for environmental purposes. The Government are therefore committed to bringing this work to a positive conclusion as soon as possible. It is not yet possible, however, to say when guidelines might be issued.

As this work has developed, the United Kingdom has tabled a number of informal analytical papers dealing with detailed technical questions.

Textiles

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will carry out an examination of the effect on the United Kingdom textile industry of the double pricing by overseas countries of raw materials such as cotton and cashmere; if he will consider the compatibility of such measures with GATT; what remedies exist to protect the United Kingdom industry from their effect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* Although double pricing of raw materials is incompatible with GATT rules, developing countries which are GATT members are allowed derogations from the rules. Since many of the countries which practice double pricing fall into this category, it is not possible to take action against them. However, the draft GATT Uruguay round textiles agreement contains provisions which, if implemented, will make it easier to act against any member country on this issue. Remedies under GATT are available only if the country practising double pricing is a GATT member. If not, a remedy may be sought bilaterally through the appropriate mechanisms of any bilateral agreement that exists between the country concerned and the European Community.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Care Funding

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of total funding for health and social care during the 1993-94 financial year is to be spent on community care; which Department is responsible for deciding the provision for community care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Community care expenditure is not separately identified within the 1993-94 provision of £1,318 million for the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland. However, this total includes £29·452 million from which the management executive of the Department of Health and Social Services will make available the necessary funds to health and social services boards for their new community care responsibilities from 1 April 1993.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what funds have been allocated to Northern Ireland for health and social care for the financial years 1993-94 and 1995-96; and if he will break the figures down by *(a)* health board, *(b)* county and *(c)* the proportion to be spent on (i) health and social care and (ii) community care.

Mr. Hanley: Expenditure on the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland is estimated at £1,318 million for 1993-94 with planned expenditure rising to £1,504 million in 1995-96.

Expenditure on the health and personal social services cannot be attributed by county and community care expenditure is not separately identified within the HPSS programme resources. However, the totals above include £29·452 milllion in 1993-94 and £105·152 million in 1995-96 for the new community care responsibilities from 1 April 1993.

The breakdown of 1995-96 planned expenditure has not yet been determined but in terms of the initial 1993-94 revenue budgets for the health and social services boards the provision for hospital, community health and personal social services expenditure and the amount subsumed therein for their new community care responsibilities is shown in the following table:

£ millions

Health and social services board	*Revenue budget*	*New community care responsiblities*
Northern	195·872	6·957
Southern	155·688	5·414
Eastern	374·781	12·089
Western	141·267	4·932
Total	867·608	29·392

Community Care Trusts

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what options his Department has considered for reforming existing Northern Ireland legislation on *(a)* mental health and *(b)* care of children, in connection with the creation of community care trusts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The Government intend to publish a proposal for legislation later this year which will enable boards to delegate certain statutory functions to health and social services trusts.

In bringing forward new legislation, the Government's objectives are to enable as many units as possible to take advantage of the significant benefits that trust status offers, whilst also preserving the integrated structure of the health and social services in Northern Ireland.

Social Security

Sir James Kilfedder: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the application of the Social Security Revaluation of Earnings Factors (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 as it applies to additional pension paid with invalidity benefit.

Mr. Hanley: The policy intention has been that the Revaluation Order should apply to additional pensions paid with invalidity benefit. Legal advice is that provisions enacted in the Social Security (Northern Ireland) Order 1990, and carried forward into the Contributions and Benefits (Northern Ireland) Act 1992, have not given full effect to this. This means an estimated £228,000 paid between April 1992 and April 1993 will have been paid on a basis which is incorrect on the strict interpretation of the law. We intend to continue payments on an extra-statutory basis to ensure that claimants receive a level of benefits in line with the policy intention. Appropriate primary authority will be obtained in due course. The total amount paid on this basis, initially estimated at a cost of £20,000 (rounded) per month, will be reported in a note to the Department of Health and Social Services appropriation account.

Market Testing

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to the market testing of public services in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has today placed in the Library guidance on the implications for market testing of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. I hope that all those engaged in market testing, including contractors, will consider the guidance helpful.

Emergency Provisions Act 1991

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what arrangements he has made to review the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Viscount Colville of Culross, QC has accepted my invitation to prepare a report on the operation in 1992 of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. As with previous reviews, the intention is that the report should enable both Houses of Parliament to discharge effectively their responsibility to scrutinise the operation of the Act on the occasion of the annual debates on the continuance orders, and to determine whether any of the Act's temporary provisions could be allowed to lapse.

As the temporary provisions of the Act will lapse on 15 June 1993 unless continued in force by order, I have asked Viscount Colville to submit his report in sufficient time to facilitate the House's consideration of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act.

Health and Social Services Boards

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 4 March, *Official Report*, column *247*, whether employees of the health and social security boards can define themselves as British or United Kingdom citizens.

Mr. Hanley *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* There is no provision for employees of the health and social services boards to indicate whether they are British or United Kingdom citizens.

Police Interview Notes

Mr. Mallon: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many requests have been made to the Royal Ulster Constabulary in each of the past three years for the disclosure of original interview notes in cases where criminal charges have been brought; in how many instances these requests have been denied; and for what reasons.

Mr. Mates *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* This is a matter for the chief constable. However, I understand that statistical records on the number of requests for access to original interview notes are not maintained by the Royal Ulster Constabulary and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prevention of Terrorism Acts

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have had their period of detention under the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts extended pending the results of forensic tests.

Sir Patrick Mayhew *[holding answer 3 March 1993]:* I consider each application to extend the 48-hour period for which a person may be detained under section 14 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1989 very carefully, and I take into account all the relevant circumstances of each case, which frequently include the need for further forensic work. It would only be possible to provide details of these cases at disproportionate cost. It is worthy of note that, in his most recent report on the operation of the Act in 1992, Lord Colville who looked at all the extension order files was able to conclude that "the proper criteria are being carefully observed in considering whether extensions should be granted".

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many legal aid certificates have been issued for *(a)* criminal cases and *(b)* civil cases in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of criminal legal aid orders and civil legal aid certificates issued for each of the last 10 years is given in the table.

Legal aid certificates issued 1982-83 to 1991-92

Year	(a) Legal aid orders granted in criminal cases	Year	(b) Legal aid certificates issued in civil cases (thousands)
1982	428,494	1982-83	189·6
1983	446,654	1983-84	205·9
1984	471,186	1984-85	222·2
1985	525,248	1985-86	232·4
1986	518,202	1986-87	245·7
1987	575,649	1987-88	245·4
1988	594,297	1988-89	226·0
1989	608,962	1989-90	259·2
1990	623,554	1990-91	297·6
1991	638,305	1991-92	337·3

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary Lord Chancellor's Department how many legal aid certificates have been issued for *(a)* criminal cases and *(b)* civil cases in each of the last 24 months.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Table *(a)* gives numbers of legal aid certificates issued in civil cases in each month from January 1991 to February 1993. Statistics for the issue of legal aid orders in criminal cases are collected quarterly, and the numbers of such orders issued during each quarter in 1991 and 1992 are shown in table *(b)*.

Table (a)

Month	Number of civil legal aid certificates issued
1991	
January	28,937
February	26,165
March	25,365
April	25,191
May	31,257
June	28,959
July	22,151
August	31,264
September	26,967
October	31,658
November	31,648
December	24,820
1992	
January	33,287
February	30,632
March	35,679
April	32,249
May	26,896
June	34,166
July	39,099
August	31,852
September	35,594
October	36,868
November	39,439
December	31,210
1993	
January	33,906
February	36,704

Table (b)

Quarter	Number of legal aid orders issued in criminal cases
January to March 1991	149,148
April to June 1991	150,004
July to September 1991	163,920
October to December 1991	162,073
January to March 1992	167,432
April to June 1992	155,916
July to September 1992	151,925
October to December 1992	143,319

The Department's statistical returns from magistrates courts are, however, incomplete and the above figures for criminal legal aid orders have been estimated based on the information available.

Family Perspective and Life Circle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on how his Department takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: One of the Departments' aims is to establish a single body of family law applied within a unified jurisdictional structure by specialist courts and supported by appropriate services. As an employer, the Department seeks to support those with dependant carer responsibilities by offering a range of flexible working conditions, including job-sharing, working at home and term-time working.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department in which publication, speech or statement his Department has described how it takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Department's strategic plan, which is to be published on 22 April, includes a description of the developments and initiatives in the fields of family law and departmental personnel policy. The plan will set out objectives and targets relating to both of these areas. "Judicial Statistics" and the "Court Service Annual Report" are the principal publications giving statistical information about the Department. Both publications are produced in July each year and placed in the Libraries.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Television Programmes

Mr. Stephen: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will take action to ensure that the Parliament and courts of the United Kingdom have sole right to decide whether violent or pornographic television programmes may be received on television sets in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: Responsibility for television programmes originating in the United Kingdom falls to the independent regulatory authorities—the BBC governors,

the Independent Television Commission and the Welsh Fourth Channel Authority (S4C). It is for these bodies to ensure that nothing is included in programmes which is likely to encourage or incite to crime or lead to disorder or be offensive to public feeling. Broadcasts originating elsewhere in the EC must meet the standards set out in the EC Television Without Frontiers Directive (89/552/EEC), and any action which the Government take in relation to such broadcasts must be in accordance with our international obligations.

Television Licences

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what estimate has been made of the number of unlicensed television sets in use in *(a)* Belfast, *(b)* Londonderry and *(c)* the remainder of Northern Ireland in each of the past five years; and how many households have been prosecuted for use of an unlicensed television;

(2) what estimate has been made of the number of unlicensed television sets in use in *(a)* England, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* Wales in each of the past five years; and how many households have been prosecuted for use of an unlicensed television.

Mr. Brooke: Under section 180 and schedule 18 of the Broadcasting Act 1990, responsibility for administration of the television licensing system, including enforcement of the licensing requirement, passed to the BBC with effect from 1 April 1991. I understand from the BBC that statistics for estimated television licence evasion and prosecution rates in Northern Ireland are not broken down by area. Estimated evasion and actual prosecution rates for the financial years 1988-89 to 1992-93 for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are given in the table. The number of evaders is based on a percentage evasion rate applied to the total number of licences in force.

	Estimated number of evaders	*Prosecutions*
1 April 1988 to 31 March 1989		
England	1,291,642	153,219
Scotland	146,216	9,062
Wales	84,024	10,568
Northern Ireland	158,147	967
1 April 1989 to 31 March 1990		
England	1,190,241	149,724
Scotland	143,056	9,686
Wales	82,205	11,094
Northern Ireland	144,447	1,868
1 April 1990 to 31 March 1991		
England	1,318,517	159,131
Scotland	155,351	11,275
Wales	94,894	10,283
Northern Ireland	150,265	2,032
1 April 1991 to 31 March 1992		
England	1,337,908	182,869
Scotland	146,173	12,791
Wales	97,088	10,898
Northern Ireland	129,829	2,508
1 April 1992 to 31 March 1993		
England	1,381,430	166,206
Scotland	147,392	11,082
Wales	96,274	11,605
Northern Ireland	137,743	1,634

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Key *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* My Department was formed in April 1992 and has incurred expenditure of £23,260 to date on official entertainment. A comparable figure for 1991-92 is not available.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Civil Service college has contracted out the distribution of the college prospectus to JBS Mailing Services, without in-house comparison. The service represented a small part of the activities of several in-house units and it was considered unproductive to continue with this arrangement.

Mr. Heald: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will issue guidance on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to the Government's market testing initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: The 1991 White Paper "Competing for Quality" set out the Government's plans for achieving more effective competition, and thereby better value for money, through an expanded market testing programme in central Government. Department's current market testing targets for the period up to September 1993 cover work costing about £1·5 billion and employing 44,000 staff. This work will be offered to outside contractors, for the most part in competition with the in-house teams currently providing the service.

I am today placing in the Library guidance on the implications for market testing of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. In some cases where work is awarded to an outside contractor following market testing that may constitute the transfer of an undertaking in the terms of the regulations. If so, the regulations provide that the new employer takes over responsibility for the employment contracts of the employees, who would transfer on their previous terms and conditions of service. The guidance sets out circumstances in which the regulations are, and are not, likely to apply, and explains their effect where they do. It is intended for information only, to help those engaged in market testing, including potential contractors, to understand the issues involved. It is not designed as a complete statement of the law, and does not obviate the need for legal advice to be taken. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Scotland,

for Wales, for Northern Ireland and for Health are making separate statements on the application of the regulations to their areas of responsibility.

The guidance makes clear that, as has been the case for over 10 years, contracting out is not affected by the regulations unless it involves enough of the elements of the original operation; such as premises, staff, good will or customer base, to constitute the transfer of a going concern. Whether this applies in any particular case will depend on the nature of the work awarded and the contractors' own proposals for carrying it out.

The Government intend that market testing should proceed without delay. The Government look to bidders, both external and in-house, to put forward innovative proposals for carrying out the work. Bidders will be given access to information about the numbers of posts in the in-house operation, and the terms and conditions of service which attach to the posts, where they need it in order to submit a bid based on a proposal to which the Regulations might apply.

The Government will specify requirements for services being market tested in terms of the outputs to be delivered rather than the structure or methods used to deliver them, and without prejudging whether or not the regulations will apply. Where the regulations would not otherwise apply, it would be inconsistent with our policy to seek to require contractors to adopt particular employment terms and conditions or use particular employees to do the work. It would also be inconsistent with our policy to reorganise in-house operations prior to market testing with the purpose of bringing any subsequent transfer within the scope of the regulations or to dictate the contractor's organisational structure except for reasons strictly related to the performance of the service in question. Bids will be evaluated against the specification on the basis of quality and value for money.

Departments will take account of the costs of redundancies, if any, involved in the respective tender proposals. Some contractors have expressed concern about the possible additional costs involved in a tender proposal falling within the scope of the Regulations compared with a proposal which does not do so. Whilst the basic cost of the former may be higher, the latter is more likely to involve redundancy or redeployment costs which would be taken into account in comparing the respective tender bids. Genuinely innovative proposals should still enable contractors to offer good value for money to Departments, whether or not the regulations apply.

Research Vessels Services

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish the cruise programme of Research Vessels Services (Barry) for 1993-94; and how the programme will be funded.

Mr. Waldegrave: As in previous years, the cruise programme of Research Vessels Services for 1993-94 will be funded from the science Vote, supplemented by commissioned research and charter income.

I have placed copies of the cruise programme for 1993-94 in the Library.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Police (Assaults)

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General how many charges for assaults on police officers in 1992 were reduced by the Crown prosecution service from the original to a lesser charge.

The Attorney-General: The information sought by the hon. Member is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

European Court of Justice

Dr. Godman: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions in the past five years *(a)* a magistrates court, *(b)* a crown court, *(c)* a high court, *(d)* a court of appeal and *(e)* the House of Lords requested the European Court of Justice to provide a ruling as provided in article 177 of the treaty of Rome.

The Attorney-General: A magistrates court has requested the European Court of Justice to provide a ruling under article 177 of the treaty on nine occasions in the past five years. A Crown Court has sought a ruling on four occasions, the High Court on 22 occasions, the Court of Appeal on 10 occasions and the House of Lords on five occasions during that period.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

International Development Association

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *601*, on the United Kingdom's contribution to the International Development Association, if he will set out the United Kingdom's contribution in constant 1992 prices.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The information requested is set out in the table.

United Kingdom contributions to IDA replenishments

	£ million Cash	*£ million 1992 prices*
Replenishments		
IDA 1	47	532
Supplementary	34	334
IDA 2	56	510
Supplementary	43	330
IDA 3	128	896
IDA 4	206	1,045
IDA 5	475	1,485
IDA 6	555	1,132
Special contribution	105	174
IDA 7	402	634
IDA 8	524	721
IDA 9	619	645
IDA 10[1]	620	603

[1] Proposed contribution.

Note

Commitments to IDA 1-3 were in US$. The current price figures have been converted to £ at the exchange rate prevailing at the start of the relevant commitment period. The constant price series was formed by deflating the total amount committed by the UK GDP deflator, based on the start of the relevant commitment period. For IDA 10 this will be 1 July 1993.

Cambodia

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which United Kingdom representatives attended the donors conference convened by the United Nations held in Phnom Penh on 25 February; what issues were raised; what further funding Her Majesty's Government have committed to Cambodia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The donor meeting in Phnom Penh on 25 February, called to review progress and enable co-ordination, was attended by the United Kingdon head of mission in Phnom Penh and his deputy. The meeting focused on the need for donors to accelerate aid expenditure and to give attention to the geographical and sectoral distribution of their programmes and the particular needs of the health and education sectors.

We announced further assistance for repatriation (£400,000 through UNHCR), food aid (£100,000 through the World Food Programme), human rights education (£71,000) and well-drilling (£90,000). The latter will cover schemes in areas controlled by all three factions participating n the peace process.

Food Aid

Mr. Enright: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has held with United Nations bodies, the OECD and the EC with a view to rationalising the accounts required by donor countries of recipient countries in their use of food aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have regular discussions on the uses of food aid with our EC partners and with other members of the world food programme. We are always ready to discuss specific problems that may arise in accounting for United Kingdom food aid with the organisation through which the aid is channeled.

Somali Refugees

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Kenyan Government on financial assistance to help with the Somali refugees in Kenya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development discussed the burden imposed on Kenya by Somali refugees with President Moi last September. It was also raised when Baroness Chalker visited Kenya in February. In 1992, we provided almost £2·5 million, including 5,000 tonnes of food, for projects in northern Kenya to help refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the proposals for security assurances tabled by the delegation of the Nigerian Government at the fourth review conference of the treaty on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We have noted the proposals tabled by the Nigerian Government.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what security assurances have been given by Her Majesty's Government to non-nuclear weapon states.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) which are parties to the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) benefit from both our positive security assurance (PSA) and our negative security assurance (NSA). NNWS, not party to the NPT but party to other similar internationally binding commitments are also covered by our NSA.

Cambodia

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what financial, military and other support Her Majesty's Government have provided for the UNTAC in Cambodia.

Mr. Goodlad: As well as our assessed contribution to the UNTAC budget (6·102 per cent. of the estimated $1·69 billion costs, ie $103 million), we have provided 122 personnel to UNTAC's military component. We will also be providing a number of polling station officers for the elections due to take place in May.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will recommend to the United Nations Security Council a strengthening of the UNTAC mandate; what progress has been made in planning development assistance for Cambodia following elections; and which sectors have been prioritised.

Mr. Goodlad: We have no plans to propose a change to UNTAC's mandate. UNTAC has made considerable progress towards implementing the Paris agreements under difficult circumstances. Elections are planned for May; electoral registration has been completed, with 4·6 million Cambodians registered to vote; and more than 320,000 refugees have returned to Cambodia. The international community has pledged some $880 million to Cambodia, within which the United Kingdom has pledged some $30 million, to be used for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Cambodia. There is continuing co-ordination between donors who have agreed that in allocating resources priority will be given to the health and education sectors.

Palestine Liberation Organisation

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Minister of State's meeting with representatives of the PLO; and what assurances were sought from the PLO concerning the abandonment of the Intifada.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Faisal Husseini, head of the Palestinian negotiating team, called on me on 9 March, accompanied by two PLO officials. I explained the importance of an early resumption of the peace process. I told Mr. Husseini that we recognised the need for Israeli moves to lighten the weight of the occupation, but that it would be an enormous help if the Palestinian leadership were able to take steps to reduce violence by Palestinians.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is *(a)* the amount of grant in aid and *(b)* the total budget at 1993 of the Welsh Development Agency at 1993 prices in each year since 1987-88; and what amount is planned for each year until 1996-97.

Mr. David Hunt: Figures for the period 1987-88 to 1993-94 are set out in the table:

	Grant in aid 1993-94 prices[3] *£ million*	*Total gross budget 1993-94 prices*[3] *£ million*
1987-88	73·9	139·4
1988-89	81·6	151·7
1989-90	86·3	165·0
1990-91	93·0	170·9
1991-92	93·4	169·6
1992-93[1]	80·6	171·3
1993-94[2]	59·6	171·4

[1] Forecast outturn.
[2] Plans.
[3] 1993-94 prices derived using latest GDP deflator.

Total budgets and grant in aid for the years 1994-95 to 1996-97 will be decided during the course of future public expenditure surveys, although indicative levels of central Government expenditure cash plans are shown in "The Government Expenditure Plans 1993-94 to 1995-96—A Report by the Welsh Office", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Radiological Protection Board Survey

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to announce the results of the Radiological Protection Board survey of Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The results of the next phase of the survey of radon levels in Wales are expected in spring 1994.

ReChem International Ltd.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received regarding ReChem International Ltd. in Pontypool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Over the last year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has received a petition and a number of letters from the residents of the Pontypool area about various issues relevant to ReChem International Ltd. The three main themes have been the company's plans to build a new (replacement) incinerator at its Pontypool site; the question of environmental pollution and the import of toxic waste. The first of these issues is currently the subject of an application to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution. The second is being addressed in the major study the Welsh Office has commissioned from the university of East Anglia, and which is now drawing to a close. As regards the third, the Government is committed to the principle of self-sufficiency in waste disposal within the international community, which is incorporated in the European Community Waste Shipment Regulation, agreed at Council on 20 October 1992.

Schools Expenditure

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of spending in maintained schools has been met by the Welsh Office in *(a)* each of the last five years and *(b)* 1978-79.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Local authority schools are funded through the annual local government revenue and capital settlements. Resources provided by the Welsh Office are not hypothecated to particular services. For 1993-94 Government plans will provide local authorities with 90 per cent. central Government support for revenue expenditure, including loan charges. Grant maintained schools are fully funded by the Welsh Office but are free to generate additional income.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many places for children with special educational needs are purchased in non-maintained and independent special schools by local education authorities *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each local education authority.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Information on the number of places purchased for children with special educational needs in non-maintained and independent special schools is not available centrally. Information relating to the number of pupils with statements of special educational needs, by local education authority and place of education, is given in table 12·01 of "Statistics of Education and Training in Wales: Schools No. 1 1993".

Health Promotion Authority

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the budget for the Health Promotion Authority for Wales in 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Subject to parliamentary approval, in 1993-94 £3,619,000 will be made available to the Health Promotion Authority for Wales including £384,000 for new projects, £20,000 to fund the authority's capital expenditure and £126,000 for the authority's life education centres project. The allocation will be conditional upon satisfactory completion of annual performance review. It represents a further and substantial commitment of resources to the authority.

Market Testing

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidance to contractors and public authorities on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to the market testing of public services in Wales.

Mr. David Hunt: My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—has today placed in the Library of the House guidance on the implications for market testing of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations.

I hope that all those engaged in market testing, including contractors, will find the guidance helpful.

PRIME MINISTER

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he had with members of the United States Congress on his recent visit to Washington about Matrix Churchill.

The Prime Minister: None.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 March.

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 11 March.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Knighthoods

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister if it is now his policy that the Lord Mayor of the City of London corporation will no longer be recommended automatically for a knighthood.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* Yes.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how many hon. Members have received knighthoods since 1979.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* One hundred and seven Members of Parliament have received knighthoods since May 1979.

Prerogative Powers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *19*, if he will give examples of areas where the prerogative powers residing in the Crown are not exercisable by Ministers.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* There is a variety of situations in which the Queen may exercise the prerogative directly or on the basis of advice, including the advice of Ministers. These include the Dissolution of Parliament and certain appointments—for example, those of Ministers, the Archbishop of Canterbury, other ecclesiastical appointments, lords lieutenant and certain other office holders. In the matter of honours, the Queen would normally make appointments herself in the Order of the Garter, the Order of the Thistle, the Order of Merit and in the Royal Victorian Order, but for the rest would receive recommendations from her Ministers here and in the Commonwealth.

Manufacturers

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on his Government's policy on the level of support and encouragement which should be given to British manufacturers.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* The Government's commitment to industry is at the heart of our policies, where it will remain. I refer my hon. Friend to the detailed answers that he received from my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment on 26 January at column *659*, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry on 27 January at columns, *735-36*, and my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary on 29 January at column *894* for details of specific measures that the Government have recently taken.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Sterling (Devaluation)

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the extent of the devaluation of the pound sterling against *(a)* the deutschmark, *(b)* the US dollar and *(c)* the basket of international currencies since the close of trading in London on Tuesday 15 September 1992 on the latest available figures.

Mr. Nelson: Between the close of business in London on 15 September 1992 and opening 8 March 1993 the £ sterling has declined against the deutschmark by 13·9 per cent., against the dollar by 23·6 per cent. and against its exchange rate index by 13·5 per cent.

Council Tax

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of carrying out the valuation of properties in Wales for the council tax; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The cost of the valuation banding of domestic properties in Wales was £2,899,149.

Value Added Tax

Mr. McFall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with representatives of charities and voluntary bodies on the possible imposition of VAT on their activities.

Sir John Cope *[pursuant to the answer, 4 March 1993, Official Report, c. 242]:* While neither the Economic Secretary nor the Chancellor of the Exchequer has had recent discussions with representatives of charities and voluntary bodies about VAT, I met representatives of the Charities Tax Reform Group for a general discussion on 3 March 1993.

ENVIRONMENT

Ruddy Duck

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the organisations which are currently involved with Her Majesty's Government's working group into the Ruddy duck problem; what preliminary conclusions have been reached by the group; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The working group referred to by the hon. Member is drawing up a strategy to control the Ruddy duck, an introduced species, which has spread from Britain to mainland Europe and is hybridising with and putting at risk the survival of the globally threatened White-headed duck.

The working group is chaired by the Government's statutory scientific advisers, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. The other organisations represented are the Department of the Environment, the Welsh Office, English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales, Scottish Natural Heritage, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, the International Council for Bird Preservation, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the British Trust for Ornithology.

My Department, in partnership with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau organised an international workshop at Arundel, Sussex on 1 and 2 March of more than 50 delegates from 10 countries. The workshop helped to foster mutual understanding about the scale of the problem and a recognition that international co-operation was needed to tackle it. The agreed objective was to develop a strategy to stop and reverse the population and range expansion of the Ruddy duck in order to safeguard the White-headed duck. Delegates were asked to take back to their countries recomendations for action in a number of areas including legislation, monitoring, research, control measures, public relations and captive birds. The problems can be resolved only on the basis of mutual understanding and effort.

In Spain, the Ruddy duck is undermining conservation efforts to save the White-headed duck. I am very pleased to learn that the Spanish delegation at the workshop found the proceedings helpful and that they were encouraged by the positive action being taken in Britain to address the problem.

Ozone Levels, Lerwick

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what levels of high-level ozone were recorded at Lerwick during the week 22 to 28 February, and what was the degree of deviation from normal recorded levels.

Mr. Maclean: Dobson spectrophotometer measurements of total ozone at Lerwick for the week 22 to 28 February were:

Date (1993)	*Ozone Dobson units*
22 February	230
23 February	256
24 February	[1]no data
25 February	[1]no data
26 February	351
27 February	362
28 February	312

[1] Due to weather conditions.

The average February measurement over the period 1981 to 1992 is 365 DU. The monthly average for February 1993 was 286 DU, just outside the range of previous February monthly averages which is 290 to 466 DU.

Housing Subsidy

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many local authorities show a negative housing entitlement under the Government's housing subsidy scheme;

(2) how many local authorities receive no Government housing subsidies and made contributions from their housing revenue to the general fund for their local authority for the years *(a)* 1991-92, *(b)* 1992-93 and *(c)* for 1993-94.

Mr. Baldry: Housing revenue account (HRA) subsidy is distributed on the basis of each local housing authority's need to spend relative to other authorities. This involves making sensible assumptions about each authority's income and expenditure, with HRA subsidy making up any shortfall between those assumptions. If an authority's rental and other income is assumed to exceed its housing expenditure, it is required to make a contribution towards its rent rebate expenditure. If an authority's assumed income exceeds all of its housing expenditure and its rent rebate expenditure, it must transfer the surplus to its general fund.

On the basis of provisional claim forms from authorities in respect of the current financial year, 273 authorities are assumed to have a negative housing entitlement, and therefore make contributions to their rent rebates expenditure; 22 of those authorities are not claiming HRA subsidy and anticipate making contributions to their general funds. On the basis of final claim forms received for 1991-92, 18 authorities received no HRA subsidy and made contributions to their general funds. Information for 1993-94 is not yet available.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average rent for a three-bedroomed council house in *(a)* an authority that does not receive housing subsidy and *(b)* in an area where housing subsidy is paid.

Mr. Baldry: The Department does not collect information on rents for local authority dwellings of different sizes.

The average weekly unrebated rent for all English authorities is £30·70. There are considerable variations in local authority rents in different areas due to the varying nature of the dwelling stock and its age. In the current financial year, 1992-93, the average weekly unrebated rent for all council dwellings in those authorities which make a contribution towards rent rebate expenditure is £30·37. The average rent in the authorities which receive full HRA subsidy is £31·03.

Self-build Projects

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the self-build projects which will benefit from loans or grants from the Housing Corporation for the building of houses in England in the current financial year.

Sir George Young: The details of individual schemes are a matter for the Housing Corporation.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *162*, which Government Department holds information on how many completed self-build units are achieved in the United Kingdom each year; and if there are any comparable figures available to illustrate how the United Kingdom compares with other European countries.

Sir George Young: The Department of the Environment collects a range of house-building data but

this does not separately distinguish self-build activity. Information on completions of self-build housing is not collected by any other Government Department. Comparable official figures for other European countries are not known, nor is any unofficial source for such figures known.

Housing Market Package

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many properties were purchased under the housing market package from the Ministry of Defence.

Sir George Young: Sixty six properties have been purchased from the Ministry of Defence under the housing market package, and approvals have been granted for a further 12.

Transport and the Environment

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he has made to consult business, voluntary groups, local authorities and others with interests and expertise in transport and the environment concerning the United Kingdom's report to the Sustainable Development Commission.

Mr. Maclean: The Government are committed to widespread consultation in the preparation of the United Kingdom report to the Sustainable Development Commission. We have written to more than 150 organisations and individuals inviting views of submissions, and welcome the views of anyone who would like to contribute. We will be holding a seminar at Green college, Oxford, this month to discuss the key issues, and we will continue consultation through further meetings and correspondence throughout the year. Organisations with an interest in transport are being fully involved in all these consultations.

Housing Overcrowding

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what evidence his Department has of the extent of overcrowding in *(a)* owner-occupied properties and *(b)* low-cost home ownership schemes.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for housing and planning on 8 February 1993, *Official Report*, column *519*, to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Dr. Jones).

Ministers' Appointments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *219*, if he will give the dates between which all the stated Ministers held their appointments.

Mr. Robin Squire: The dates between which the stated Ministers held their appointments are:

Secretary of State
Mr. Michael Heseltine—May 1979 to 6 January 1983 and 28 November 1990 to 11 April 1992
Mr. Tom King—6 January 1983 to 8 June 1983
Mr. Patrick Jenkin—9 June 1983 to 2 September 1985
Mr. Kenneth Baker—2 September 1985 to 21 May 1986
Mr. Nicholas Ridley—21 May 1986 to 24 July 1989
Mr. Chris Patten—24 July 1989 to 28 November 1990
Mr. Michael Howard—11 April 1992 to

Minister of State
Mr. Tom King—May 1979 to 6 January 1983
Lord Bellwin—6 January 1983 to 10 September 1984
Mr. Kenneth Baker—10 September 1984 to 2 September 1985
Mr. John Patten—2 September 1985 to 15 June 1987
Dr. Rhodes Boyson—11 September 1986 to 15 June 1987
Mr. Michael Howard—15 June 1987 to 25 July 1988
Mr. John Gummer—25 July 1988 to 24 July 1989
David Hunt—25 July 1989 to 4 May 1990
Mr. Michael Portillo—4 May 1990 to 13 April 1992
Mr. John Redwood—14 April 1992 to

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Lord Bellwin—May 1979 to 6 January 1983
The Hon. William Waldegrave—9 June 1983 to 2 September 1985
Mrs. Angela Rumbold—2 September 1985 to 10 September 1986
Mr. Christopher Chope—11 September 1986 to 23 July 1990
The Hon. Colin Moynihan—15 June 1987 to 23 July 1990
Mrs. Virginia Bottomley—25 July 1988 to 27 October 1989
Lord Hesketh—1 February 1989 to 23 July 1990
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory—27 October 1989 to 30 November 1990
Mr. Robert Atkins—23 July 1990 to 30 November 1990
Mr. Patrick Nicholls—23 July 1990 to 11 October 1990
Lady Blatch—7 September 1990 to 21 May 1991
Mr. Robert Key—11 October 1990 to 13 April 1992
Mr. Robin Squire—14 April 1992 to

Homelessness

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investigation he has made into the causes of the change in the numbers of households recorded as homeless at home after acceptance by local authorities in England as homeless under part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Sir George Young: Local authorities report the number of households for whom they accept responsibility to secure permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 in their quarterly P1(E) return.

In the second quarter of 1991 the return was revised to identify households who after acceptance remain temporarily in their existing accommodation until permanent accommodation can be found. Latest estimates of such "homeless at home" households at the end of each quarter are as follows:

	"Homeless at Home" households
Q2 1991	[1]10,020
Q3 1991	[1]9,970
Q4 1991	[1]8,700
Q1 1992	[1]8,460
Q2 1992	[1]11,080
Q3 1992	10,670

[1] Estimates for these quarters have been revised since first published.

The variations between quarters in these estimates are likely to represent both seasonal and other fluctuations in homeless acceptances and in the availability of permanent rehousing.

Flats over Shops

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made of the drop-out rate for schemes to promote increased residential use in town centres where the living over the shop database information has not been utilised.

Sir George Young: The flats over shops scheme is based on competitive bids submitted by local authorities. This Department does not monitor whether bids have been compiled using the local knowledge and experiences of authorities and their housing association partners or from information supplied by the living over the shop project or any other agency active in the field.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much has been allocated to promote the "living over the shop" project within his Department.

Sir George Young: Taking into account moneys provisionally allocated for 1993-94, some £113,075 has been made available by this Department and the Housing Corporation in support of the "living over the shop" project. The project has also received resources from other funding agencies and from its own income generation.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how many properties have been made available as a result of the flats over shops initiative; and if he will make a statement about its future; (2) what representations he has received about the flats over shops initiative;

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list the value of the applications for funds in each *(a)* local authority and *(b)* region under the flats over shops initiative for England in 1992-93.

(2) how many properties have been made available as a result of the flats over shops initiative; and if he will make a statement about its future.

(3) what representations he has received about the flats over shops initiative.

Sir George Young: For 1992-93 we received applications worth over £41 million for the £5 million worth of supplementary credit approvals available under the flats over shops initiative. A list of all applications has been placed in the Library. The number of properties made available will not be clear until all end of year claims have been made. An announcement has already been made about the future of this scheme with 132 authorities receiving a share of the £10 million available in 1993-94. A further £10 million will be allocated for 1994-95. We are pleased with the progress made to date under this promotion scheme in an area which we believe has significant potential. We shall continue to review its development in the light of experiences to date and to this end have been in discussion with a wide range of interested parties.

Publicity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was his Department's *(a)* publicity expenditure for each year from 1979 to 1992, *(b)* current outturn estimate for publicity expenditure for 1992-93 and *(c)* budgeted publicity expenditure for 1993-94.

Mr. Howard: The information in respect of publicity expenditure and associated staff costs for my Department including agencies is:

	£ million
1985-86	3·5
1986-87	4·2
1987-88	4·8
1988-89	6·9
1989-90	31·5
1990-91	7·5
1991-92	8·1
1992-93	[1]18·3

[1] Estimate.

Information relating to financial years 1979-80 to 1984-85 inclusive is not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate cost.

The budgets for publicity expenditure for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Local Government Finance

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, when he will take his capping decisions for 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: My right hon. and learned Friend intends to take his capping decisions for 1993-94 once he has considered all the budget information which authorities are required to submit to him no later than 16 March 1993.

However, on the basis of the information currently available to him it remains my right hon. and learned Friend's firm intention to adopt as the capping criteria for 1993-94 the provisional criteria which he announced on 26 November 1992. It is now open to any authority which has budgeted above the limit implied by those provisional criteria to set a new lower budget within that limit.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to compulsory competitive tendering.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has today issued and placed in the Library guidance on the implcations of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) ("TUPE") Regulations 1981 for the market testing of public services.

The principal provision of the TUPE Regulations is that where a "relevant transfer of an undertaking" has taken place, the new employer takes over responsibility for the employment contracts of the employees, who would transfer on their previous terms and conditions of service.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, in a statement to the Standing Committee on the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill on 21 January, set out the principles regarding the "transfer of an undertaking" as follows:

"It is clear from the case law that under both the [EC Acquired Rights] Directive and the [TUPE] Regulations, [transfer of an undertaking] means the transfer of an economic entity which is capable of operating as a going concern and which retains its identity. The contracting out of service is not a transfer of an undertaking unless it involves

enough of the elements of the original operation such as premises, staff, goodwill or customer base to constitute the transfer of a going concern."

"But no single one of these [elements] is essential for there to be a transfer. The case law makes clear that it is the overall sum of what is transferred which determines whether there has been a transfer of an undetaking."

I am aware from many complaints which I have received from hon. Members, local businesses and industry, that a number of local authorities have been including conditions in their CCT tender material which require the contractor to take on the employment of existing staff on the same terms and conditions.

This is a matter of concern, for the following reasons. The objective of CCT is to ensure that local authority services are provided in the best and most cost-effective way, for the benefit of local residents and council taxpayers. CCT gives both in-house teams and prospective private contractors the opportunity to develop and offer innovative and improved ways of providing services, enabling local authorities to choose the best option from all the possible approaches.

It is an essential part of the process of competition that local authorities are prepared to consider all possible options, without setting prior restrictions on the arrangements which prospective contractors or in-house teams must adopt, other than on matters relevant to the performance of the service.

The CCT legislation therefore requires that in seeking tenders for services, authorities must not act "in a matter having the effect or intended or likely to have effect of restricting, distorting or preventing competition." [Local Government Act 1988, section 7(7)].

Where, therefore an authority seeks in a tender invitation to ensure that tenderers will be required to take over responsibility for all existing staff and observe existing terms and conditions of service, either by:

- specifying expressly that he should make offers of employment, without economic or operational justification; or
- specifying that TUPE must apply to the contract where it is not clear at the point of inviting tenders that this would necessarily be the case; or
- seeking to achieve the same purpose by specifying requirements relating to matters other than employment of staff, without economic or operational justification;

the effect of this action is to restrict the flexibility of prospective contractors and prevent them from offering alternative arrangements for providing the service.

In the Government's view, any such requirement may deter some prospective contractors from tendering and is likely to constitute a "restriction of competition" in the terms of the legislation, and the Secretary of State will, subject to the facts of each case, take action through the notice and direction powers provided in the legislation to require the authority to remove such restrictions.

In this way, we will ensure that all local authorities conduct compulsory competitive tendering in the manner which this House provided for in the legislation, and will ensure that all authorities, residents and taxpayers continue to secure the benefits of new, more flexible, and more economical ways of providing services.

ENVIRONMENT

New-build Properties

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) on what basis he calculates and allocates the numbers of new-build residential properties for which local authorities are asked to make provision within their local plans; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what consultations he has with *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* constituency members and *(c)* others prior to announcing the allocations of the numbers of new-build residential properties for which local authorities are asked to make provision within their local plans;

(3) if he will give a breakdown by local authority of the numbers of new-build residential properties for which those local authorities have currently been asked to make provision within their local plans.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* Local plans have to be prepared by non-metropolitan districts and national parks in general conformity with structure plans. Their housing policies and proposals have to conform with the structure plan's housing allocation for each district. Structure plans are prepared by the county councils, having regard to the indicative housing allocations for each county contained in the Secretary of State's regional guidance where this has been published. All current county structure plans were approved by the Secretary of State, although revised arrangements will apply under the 1991 Act in respect of future reviews.

In drawing up regional guidance, the Secretary of State takes into account advice provided by local authority regional groupings. Both this advice and the subsequent draft guidance are subject to full public consultation.

The statutory procedures for drawing up and adopting development plans require full public consultation. They also provide an opportunity for objections to be made and for the issues and to be debated at an examination-in-public (EIP) before policies are adopted.

In Cheshire the structure plans allocation for each district between 1986 and 2001, to be taken into account in local plan preparation, is:

District	*Number*
Warrington	about 12,000
Halton	about 7,400
Ellesmere Port and Neston	about 3,600
Vale Royal	about 8,000
Macclesfield	about 7,600
Chester	about 6,100
Crewe and Nantwich	about 8,000
Congleton	about 6,000

This total includes both new units and conversions of existing buildings.

Because the structure plans have been prepared to cover different time scales, we cannot provide comparable data for other areas.

I will provide similar information for other counties if my hon. Friend would care to write to me.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on official entertainment in his Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* Total expenditure by my Department (including the Building Research Establishment Agency, the Planning Inspectorate Agency, the Buying Agency and the Queen Elizabeth II Agency) was £0·096 million in 1991-92 and is estimated to be £0·122 million in 1992-93.

Radiation Leak, Sellafield

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many members of the public were visiting Sellafield during the period of the recent radioactive leak; and whether they were examined to determine their contact with any radioactive material or informed of possible risks to their health or welfare.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

The actual number of visitors at Sellafield is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc as operators of the site. The higher than normal discharges of radioactivity during the week ending on 13 February resulted in doses through inhalation to the most exposed persons of about 1 microsievert. The dose to a member of the public visiting Sellafield at the time would have been less than this and less than the dose received from background radiation during a visit to Cornwall for a comparable period. The very low levels of radioactivity involved meant that no special arrangements were appropriate for visitors. Radiation alarms are in place at Sellafield and appropriate action would have been taken if necessary.

EDUCATION

Pupils (Exclusion)

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what education alternatives are available to pupils who have been permanently excluded from schools.

Mr. Forth: Once a pupil has been permanently excluded from a school, it is open to the parents to seek a place for their child at another school within a reasonable distance from their home. In most instances a school would not be able to refuse to admit the child unless by so doing it would exceed its standard number. LEAs also have the power under section 56 of the Education Act 1944 to provide education otherwise than at school where necessary to meet a pupil's needs. It is also open to the LEA to consider whether the child has special educational needs which call for the authority to determine the special educational provision that should be made for him.

Class Sizes

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of single-teacher classes in *(a)* Birmingham and *(b)* England comprised more than 30 children in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is shown in the table.

Percentages of single-teacher classes with 31 or more pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools.[1]
Position as at January each year

	Primary		Secondary	
	Birmingham LEA	England	Birmingham LEA	England
1992	21	20	7	4
1991	24	21	8	4
1990	26	19	7	4
1989	24	18	8	4
1988	26	18	7	5
1987	27	19	8	5
1986	28	20	10	6
1985	25	19	11	7
1984	26	19	10	7
1983	38	20	12	8
1982	31	22	11	8
1981	32	23	11	8
1980	32	24	12	9
1979	39	27	12	10

[1] Secondary school figures for 1990, 1991 and 1992 include self-governing state schools (GM) as do primary school figures for 1992.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the average size of class taught by one teacher in primary schools in *(a)* Birmingham and *(b)* England in each year since 1979.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is shown in the table.

Average size of classes taught by one teacher in maintained primary schools[1]
Position as at January each year

	Birmingham LEA	England
1992	27·6	26·4
1991	27·9	26·3
1990	27·8	25·9
1989	27·4	25·7
1988	27·3	25·4
1987	27·1	25·4
1986	26·6	25·5
1985	25·8	24·9
1984	25·7	24·7
1983	26·9	24·8
1982	26·2	25·1
1981	26·2	25·2
1980	26·4	25·4
1979	27·1	25·9

[1] Figures for January 1992 include self-governing state schools (GM).

Education Reform Act 1988

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many complaints from parents under section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988 have been outstanding for *(a)* three months and *(b)* six months since their receipt.

Mr. Forth: Five complaints which have been considered by local education authorities or school governing bodies under section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988 are now before the Secretary of State.

Of these:

(a) Three have been outstanding at the Department for Education for between three and six months and
(b) Two have been outstanding for more than six months.

Most complaints call for lengthy consultation with interested parties.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in 1992 how many complaints from parents under section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988 were determined by the Secretary of State within *(a)* one month, *(b)* two months, *(c)* three months, *(d)* four months, *(e)* six months and *(f)* more than six months of receipt.

Mr. Forth: Of the 10 section 23 complaints that have been determined by my right hon. Friend since the Education Reform Act came into force:

(a) none was determined within one month,
(b) none was determined within two months,
(c) one was determined within three months,
(d) none was determined within four months,
(e) two were determined within six months, and
(f) seven took over six months to determine.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the target period in the citizens charter for the response time for him to decide upon complaints from parents under section 23 of the Education Reform Act 1988.

Mr. Forth: The citizens charter does not state a target period for my right hon. Friend to dispose of such complaints.

Truancy

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 3 March, *Official Report*, columns *147-48*, if he will place in the Library each of the submissions being funded under the programme to reduce truancy out of the grants for education support and training scheme 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: No. The submissions included information supplied by LEAs in confidence. The Department will shortly be publishing a directory giving very brief details of each of the approved projects. I will arrange for a copy of that directory to be placed in the Library.

Special Needs

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many places are available for children with special educational needs in *(a)* non-maintained and *(b)* independent special schools; and how many places are purchased by local education authorities in each type of school.

Mr. Forth: As at January 1992, there were some 7,100 places in non-maintained special schools and some 6,700 places in those independent schools catering wholly or mainly for pupils with special educational needs.

At that time, there were some 5,800 pupils occupying places at non-maintained special schools, the majority of whom were funded by local education authorities. Information is not kept centrally on the number of such independent school places funded by local education authorities.

Spending Statistics

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of the national income has been spent on education in *(a)* each of the last five years and *(b)* 1978-79.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is as follows:

United Kingdom general Government expenditure on education as percentage of GDP

Financial year	*Per cent.*
1978-79	5·4
1987-88	4·8
1988-89	4·6
1989-90	4·8
1990-91	4·8
1991-92	5·1

Source: Cm 2219 Public Expenditure Analyses to 1995-96, table 2.4.

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of spending in maintained schools was met by his Department in *(a)* each of the last five years and *(b)* 1978-79.

Mr. Forth: Most central Government support for local authorities is in the form of revenue support grant, which is not hypothecated to individual services. Grants paid by the Department over the last five years to support expenditure in maintained schools as a percentage of total recurrent spending on maintained schools is given in the following table:

	Per cent.
1988-89	1·4
1989-90	1·9
1990-91	2·2
1991-92	2·8
1992-93	4·4

Notes:

i. Percentages calculated by expressing grants for education support and training (GEST), section 210 grant and grants to self governing state (grant-maintained) schools as a proportion of total net recurrent spending on LEA maintained and Self Governing State (Grant-maintained) schools.

ii. Net recurrent spending on schools includes institutional spending on LEA maintained and self-governing (grant-maintained) schools, and related central support services such as the school meals service, home to school transport, teacher centres, child guidance and pupil support. Also included is a pro rata share of LEA expenditure on central administration and recreational services and research. 1990-91 figure excludes balances held by schools and carried over into the 1991-92 financial year. Spending in 1991-92 and 1992-93 estimated and budgeted outturn respectively. Figures taken from 1993 DFE/OSTEND departmental report (ref: Cm 2210), except for those in respect of annual maintenance grant paid to self-governing state schools, which are taken from DFE records.

iii. Grants paid by other Government Departments to support expenditure in schools excluded from above calculations.

iv. Figures for 1978-79 not available on a comparable basis.

Cash Limits

Dr. Liam Fox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he plans to announce any further changes to cash limits on votes within his responsibility for 1992-93.

Dr. Patten *[pursuant to his replies, 4 February 1993, cols. 275-76 and 15 February 1993, col. 52]:* The cash limit for class XI, vote 1 will be changed as follows:

Class and vote	*Curent cash limit* £	*Change* £	*Revised cash limit* £
XI.1	745,895,000	−108,000	745,787,000

The reduction in the cash limit for class XI, vote 1 is to offset wholly payment to the university of Hull in respect of a grant from the European regional development fund to be made in 1992-93 towards a project for the construction of a research centre in surface engineering. A net token subhead will be added to class XI, vote 2, with the agreement of Her Majesty's Treasury, in the appropriation accounts for 1992-93 in due course, to enable the transaction to be audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. These changes will not add to the planned total for public expenditure.

TRANSPORT

Disturbance Claim

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the disturbance claim of Mr. and Mrs. Casey, Uplands, Landkey road, Barnstaple, lodged in January 1991, is to be resolved.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am writing to the hon. Member.

Road Safety

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the scope and duration of the Transport Research Laboratory's study of the best methods for the signpostings of red light cameras for road safety purposes; and if he will indicate what conclusions have been reached in that study.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Studies are being undertaken by the Transport Research Laboratory and by independent consultants into the effectiveness of red light camera signs. Early results indicate that the signs add to the effectiveness of the cameras. We hope to issue advice shortly which will enable these signs to be used more widely in conjunction with cameras.

Family Perspective and Life Cycle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on how his Department takes account of the family perspective and life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department;

(2) in which publication, speech or statement his Department has described how it takes account of the family perspective and life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department.

Mr. MacGregor: My Department seeks to take account of the needs of all transport users, including families and those of different age groups. In particular, a clear priority within the Government's long-term programme of casualty reduction is to improve the safety of vulnerable road users such as children and the elderly. For example, we are continuing to encourage traffic calming measures, to keep speeds low and improve driver behaviour, especially in sensitive locations such as residential areas and near schools and shops.

Initiatives to improve family mobility include trials of low floor buses, due to begin later this year in London and north Tyneside, which will improve access for parents with young children.

The Department has issued various publications and launched a number of campaigns on these themes,

including some aimed at specific age groups. The Department's national travel survey records both household travel and the age and sex of household members; it also records the relationship of household members to each other, allowing households of various kinds to be identified.

Motorways

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give the total number of motorway sites in the United Kingdom providing toilet facilities *(a)* in 1989, *(b)* currently and *(c)* planned for 1994.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Toilets are provided at all motorway service areas (MSAs), while other locations where toilets are available have also been signed from motorways from time to time. In 1989 there were 42 MSAs in England and three other facilities signed from motorways. Corresponding figures for March 1993 are 44 and five respectively. We expect at least three further MSAs to have opened by the end of 1994, and a number of others to be under construction. Since 6 August, development of future MSAs has been a matter for the private sector.

Motorway services in Scotland and Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what further action he will take to ensure that litter is removed from motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I am determined to ensure that the standards and response times for litter clearance specified in the code of practice on litter and refuse are met. Motorway patrols are required to report accumulations of litter so that action can be put in hand to clear them quickly. More than £3 million will be spent on sweeping and removing litter from motorways this year.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about increasing the 70 mph limit on motorways.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I receive few representations for an increase in the motorway speed limit; most relate to the desirability of a lower limit or increased enforcement of the existing limit.

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the suitability of the 70 mph speed limit in regard to safety.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Such an assessment was made as part of the speed limit review in July 1991, which concluded that the 70 mph limit continued to strike the right balance between the need for efficient travel and road safety. The policy document "Killing Speed and Saving Lives" published on 13 January 1993 provided information on the relationship between speed and road accidents on which that conclusion was based. A copy is available in the Library of the House.

Mr. Peter Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has commissioned on the possible effects of closing entrances and exits on the M25.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A major review carried out in 1988-89 considered the control of access to the M25 as a traffic management measure to maximise the operational efficiency of the motorway. It was concluded that, although closure of junctions might relieve congestion on the M25, the overall effect of increased traffic on local roads would be to create congestion, accidents and environmental disbenefits.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the length of the motorway where the M6 and M42 run in parallel.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The M6 and M42 motorways run in parallel for approximately two and a quarter miles.

Coaches and Buses (Safety)

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 24 February, *Official Report*, column *586-87*, if he will make it his policy to reduce the maximum permitted speed for coaches and large buses which are not fitted with anti-lock brakes or seat belts on exposed seats and will not have to comply with European superstructure strength requirements from 1 April.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. There is no evidence that the current maximum speed for such vehicles constitutes a road safety risk.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Norris: None since the two cases to which I referred in my answer on 12 February, *Official Report*, columns *864-65;* those cases were dealt with under the procedures which pre-dated the publication of "Competing for Quality" (Cm. 1730)).

Trunk Roads Manchester

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list *(a)* the planned trunk road schemes for Greater Manchester, *(b)* the construction costs at 1993 prices and *(c)* the expected date of commencement for each scheme.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The information is given in the table.

Greater Manchester

Scheme	*Construction cost excluding VAT* [1] *£ million*	*Next stage* [2]
M56 widening junction 4–6	15·2	Works start spring 1993
M62 widening and improvement junctions 14–17	11·1	Works start spring 1993
M62 widening and improvement junctions 18–24	256·0	Public consultation summer 1993
M63 widening junctions 6–9	46·3	Order publication
M66 MORR (Denton to Middleton) contract 4—M62 to River Irk diversion	27·6	Works start spring 1993
M66 MORR (Denton to Middleton) contract 2—Advance side roads	38·1	Works start spring 1994
M66 MORR (Denton to Middleton) contract 1—Denton to River Medlock	54·2	Works start spring 1995
M66 MORR (Denton to Middleton) contract 3—River Medlock to River Irk	40·6	Works start spring 1996
A6(M) Stockport north-south bypass	53·0	Supplementary orders published. Offerton road junction under review
A6(M)–M56 (Manchester airport) link (central section)	13·6	Works start summer 1993
A6(M)–M56 (Manchester airport) link (western section)	10·6	Public consultation summer 1993
A6 Disley and High lane bypass	55·4	Order publication
A57/A628 Mottram, Hollingworth, Tintwistle bypass	14·8	Preferred route announcement summer 1993
A5225 Wigan Hindley and Westhoughton bypass	103·0	Order publication summer 1993
Greater Manchester western and northern relief road—M56 to M62	140·8	Preferred route announcement
Greater Manchester western and northern relief road—M62 to M66	205·0	Public consultation 1993

[1] Costs are at quarter 1 1992 prices; the latest date for which firm prices are available.
[2] Details of next stage are given as timing of construction largely depends upon the outcome of that stage.

Cycling

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to set targets to increase cycle use.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. It is for local authorities to decide what provision for cycling is appropriate in their areas.

Seat Belts

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made as to the effectiveness of rear seat belts of the half-belt type.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Statistics on the effectiveness of rear lap belts in the United Kingdom are not available, but research in the United States indicates that lap belts reduce death and serious injury by 25 to 40 per cent. and three-point belts by 40 to 55 per cent. Although there is no current research specifically into lap belts, the Department is monitoring the effectiveness of all seat belts in its accident crash investigations.

Dr. Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to ensure that rear seat belts in cars are all of the full-belt type.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I expect agreement to be reached shortly in the European Community permitting member states to require the compulsory fitment of three point belts for the rear outer seats of new cars from 1 January 1995 and obliging them to do so from 1 January 1996. There are at present no plans to extend this requirement to three point belts for the centre rear seat as fitting such belts can be technically complex. I believe the quickest and most effective way forward is for manufacturers voluntarily to introduce three-point belts for centre rear seats wherever technically possible. I will continue to encourage this.

Road Mileage

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated mileage of *(a)* major trunk roads, *(b)* motorways, *(c)* local highways and *(d)* cycle routes.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The latest available figures for Great Britain are for 1 April 1992 when there were 7,669 miles of major trunk road, 1,955 miles of motorway, 22,180 miles of other major roads and 193,338 miles of minor roads. Figures for cycle routes in Great Britain are not available, however, there were 512 miles of purpose-built cycleways.

Car Furnishings (Safety)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what materials are used in the air bags being installed in cars; what gas is used to inflate these bags; and what assessment has been made of the environmental and health effects of the release of gas in the event of a bag bursting or catching fire.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: A typical airbag is constructed of nylon coated with a rubber compound. The gas source is normally sodium azide, which is hermetically sealed within a strong metal container in the steering wheel hub. When the bag is deployed, the sodium azide converts into harmless nitrogen to inflate the bag; in some cases, there will be a small residue of sodium hydroxide present, which may cause skin irritation.

In the case of a fire, most systems are designed to inflate normally when the temperature reaches 300°F. There should be no risk of the inflator exploding.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what controls exist over the materials used in the interior furnishings of cars including sound proofing and foams used in car seats.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Motor Vehicles (Type Approval) (Great Britain) Regulations 1984 prescribe standards for interior fittings which all new cars must

meet. These standards cover the minimum dimensional and/or energy absorbing properties of certain components.

Following consultation with the Department, the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders has made a number of recommendations to its members on fire risk. One of those recommendations covers the flammability of the materials used in the interior furnishings of cars.

Roads, West Yorkshire

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will monitor the air quality along the route of the M62 and the A1 through the Ferrybridge and Pontefract areas in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Measurements of air quality will be undertaken at selected locations along these routes as part of detailed scheme preparation for the upgrading of the A1 to motorway.

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the proposed distance between the new A1 route through Ferrybridge and the Ferrybridge junior and infants school.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: On present plans the minimum distance of the proposed A1 motorway from the Ferrybridge junior and infants school would be about 250 yards. A proposed junction slip road would be located about 180 yards away.

Transport Supplementary Grant

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice has been issued to local authorities in respect of submissions for transport supplementary grant.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We are consulting the local authority associations about the drafting of this year's circular, which we expect to issue during April.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what share of the latest transport supplementary grant settlements was allocated to *(a)* road construction, *(b)* road maintenance, *(c)* bus priority measures, *(d)* measures specifically introduced to improve road safety, *(e)* improvements to rail services and *(f)* light rail.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* Of the £1,046·7 million available for the local roads capital settlement for 1993-94, £659·5 million was allocated for road construction, £172·8 million for structural maintenance of principal roads, £4·7 million for bus measures, and £50 million for local safety schemes. No resources were allocated for rail or light rail, as transport supplementary grant is limited by statute in England to expenditure in connection with highways or the regulation of traffic.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will require cycle route networks in all proposals submitted to transport supplementary grant approval.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: No. It will be for local authorities to decide whether to include a specific section on cycling in their 1994-95 transport policies and programmes submission.

Hazardous Substances

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what research he has commissioned or carried out in each of the last five years into the transportation of hazardous substances.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My Department commissioned surveys of the transport into and out of British ports of dangerous goods in packages, in 1989, and of bulk chemicals and gases, in 1992. It has commissioned, sometimes jointly with the Health and Safety Executive, a number of reports from the National Radiological Protection Board into aspects of the transport of radioactive material. My Department also took part in an important study, under the aegis of the Health and Safety Commission's advisory committee on dangerous substances, of the major hazards aspects of the transport of dangerous substances: its report was published in 1991. Copies of these reports are in the Library, except for those on the port movements, which contained commercially confidential information.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to apply the control of Major Accident Hazards regulations to the transportation of hazardous materials to and from existing CIMAH sites.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The Control of Industrial Major Accident Hazard Regulations 1984 (CIMAH) implement EC directives on the major accident hazards of certain industrial activities. They apply where specific dangerous substances are stored in more than specified quantities and require the preparation of emergency plans by both the operator of the site and by local authorities. It would be inappropriate and confusing to attempt to apply the CIMAH regulations to transport operations.

Regulations for the transport of dangerous goods by road apply from the commencement of loading until the vehicle is unloaded and made safe. Furthermore, the wide ranging general requirements of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 cover all aspects of interface activities including loading and unloading from all modes of transport, storage and arrangements for emergencies. The Dangerous Substances in Harbour Areas Regulations 1987 apply in harbour areas.

The transport of dangerous goods internationally is covered by long established conventions, principally under United Kingdom aegis. The European Commission is currently considering the direct application of the international rail and road rules within member states. It would be for the Community to decide in due course whether supplementing transport requirements, similar to those under the CIMAH Regulations, might be needed.

A1 (Bypasses)

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the towns and villages that are planned to be bypassed in the route of the new A1; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The sections of the A1 for which preferred routes have been announced, for upgrading to motorway, provide for the communities of Brotherton, Fairburn and Ferrybridge to be bypassed.

Mr. William: O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a breakdown of the estimated

operational costs for the additional three quarters of a mile of motorway if the new A1 was diverted to bypass Knottingley in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The first year operational costs of £100 million in respect of a route for the A1 motorway from Redhouse to Hook Moor, including a bypass to the east of Knottingley, is broken down as follows:

Costs	*£ millions*
(i) time	29·827
(ii) fuel	18·013
(iii) other vehicle costs such as depreciation and maintenance	51·502
(iv) routine maintenance such as sign replacement, drainage-renovation and condition inspections	0·347
Total	[1]99·689

[1]Rounded to £100 million.

Heathrow Rail Link

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the earliest date, assuming the satisfactory completion of all procedures, that the Paddington to Heathrow rail link could be open to passenger traffic.

Mr. Freeman: I understand that the earliest date at which the Paddington to Heathrow link could be open to passenger traffic is 1997.

Landscaping

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the criteria for inviting people to become members of the landscape advisory committee; and if he will list the qualifications of each of the current members.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend has set no specific criteria for inviting members to serve on the landscape advisory committee. Appointments are made so as to maintain a wide range of interests and expertise in landscape matters. Some of the qualifications of the current members are as follows:

Professor David K. C. Jones, BSc, FRGS appointed Chairman 1993
Professor of physical geography at the London School of Economics; consultant geomorphologist specialising in engineering, geomorphological mapping and landslide studies.

Sir Henry E. Aubrey-Fletcher
Member of the council of Country Landowners Association; member of Agricultural Land Tribunal South East Area and the Bucks and Oxon Naturalist Trust Conservation Group.

Professor Mary Benwell B.A., PH.D., F.C.I.T.
Head of School of Business at Oxford Brookes University; previously a Reader in Transport at Cranfield and a Research Director of a transport consultancy.

Dr. John A. Bergg BSc phD C.ENG FICE
Recently retired from the post of County Engineer for Surrey County Council; currently a part time consultant for a civil enginering firm.

Professor Gordon E. Cherry BA DSc (Hon) FRICS
Recently retired from the post of Head of the Geography Department at the University of Birmingham; now an independent traffic/planning consultant.

Mr. Len J. Clark CBE
Chairman of the Youth Hostels Trust (Vice President Youth Hostel Association); member of Council for National Parks and Countryside Link; member of National Trust Council & Committees.

Professor Monica M. Cole BSc Phd FIMM FRGS FGS
Retired Professor of Geography and Director of Research in Geobotany, Terrain Analysis and related resource use at the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, Surrey.

Mr. Geoffrey P. Crow BSc DipTE CEng FIHT MICE
Independent Transportation Planning Consultant and Senior Lecturer in Transport (part time) at the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine.

Ms E. Evans AA Dipl (Hons) SADG RIBA TP
Partner in firm of architects; architect and town planner with experience in urban planning.

Mr John V S Evans Dip.Arch DipLA RIBA ALI
Registered architect; consultant to the Travers Morgan Group since 1991; Former Partner of Travers Morgan Planning and Chairman of Travers Morgan Landscape; member of the Landscape Institute External Affairs Committee.

Mr C Richard Ferens MA (CANTAB) FRICS
Fellow of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors; Consultant with firm of Surveyors & valuers; a Vice-President of the Royal Agricultural Society of England; valuer for the Agricultural Mortgage Corporation and the Lord Chancellor's panel of Agricultural Arbitrators.

Professor Peter J Fowler MA PHd FSA FRHistS MIFA
Professor of Archaeology, University of Newcastle Upon Tyne; former Secretary to the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England; currently Forestry Commission archaeological consultant; member of National Trust Council and Executive & Properties Committees.

Mrs Elizabeth J Garland BA
Secretary of the Council for the Protection of Rural England (Sheffield, Peak District and South Yorkshire Branch); executive member for Council of National Parks (CNP); Chair of Development Panel of CNP.

Mr Hugh J R Geddes MA RIBA MLA (USA)
Partner and director in firm of architects; Director Pilot Properties, specialising in housing schemes on derelict urban land.

Mr Arthur D Gill
Vice-President of the Petersfield Society; member of the executive Committee of the Gwent Farming, Forestry and Wild Life Advisory Group; Director of RAC and is the nominee of the Joint Standing Committee of the RAC, AA and RSAC on the National Executive of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales (CPRW); member of the Executive Committee of the Gwent branch of the CPRW.

Mrs Janet Jack AA Dipl RIBA TP ALI
Former partner, now consultant to architect's practice; was responsible for the architectural and landscape proposals for the Channel Tunnel project.

Mrs Patricia E Lunn CGLI FRSA
Head of Horticulture, Derbyshire College of Agriculture and Horticulture; working Partner in landscape and nursery business; independent member of Horticultural Development Council and Convenor of its Levy Appeals Panel since its formation in 1986; former member of the Women's National Commission and past National President, UK Federation of Business and Professional Women.

Ms Wendy M Lutley MSc Adel (Econ Geol), BSc Lond (Geol)
Previously employed by the National Trust in management plan preparation for its open space properties and as a member of its biological survey team; more recently assistant

general secretary of the Open Spaces Society working on common land, urban open space and community action in the environment; author of the society's book "Making Space —protecting and creating open space for local communities'; now Co-director of Folk South West.

Mr. Jim M. McCluskey BSc (Civil Engineering) MICE MISTRUCT MINT ALI
Director of McCluskey Associates, a landscape architectural and planning consultancy; experienced civil structural engineer and landscape architect; author of a number of books on environmental design including "Road Form and Townscape" and "Parking: An Environmental Design Handbook".

Professor Margaret A. Mackeith MA PHD DIP TP DIP ARCH CONS FRTPI FRGS
Dean of the Faculty of Design and Technology, University of Central Lancashire, Preston; Fellow of the Royal Town Planning Institute; Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society; Member of Institute of Environmental Science.

Mr. Michael R. Porter OBE DIPLA FLI
Former Landscape Adviser to the Department of Transport which he served for 25 years.

Miss Kay S. Powell BSc MSc MRTPI MIHT
Corporate Support Officer, Chief Executive's Department South Glamorgan County Council.

Miss Wendy E. Powell MLA FLI
In private practice as landscape architect and part time lecturer; nationally elected member of the Council of the Landscape Institute.

Mrs. Valerie Russell BA (Hons)
Former Chair of the Council for National Parks; former Wealden District Councillor (Chair of the Personnel and Central Services Sub-Committee); member of the Institute of Directors, the British Institute of Management, Women in Management and the Sussex Archaeological Society.

Mr. Martin O. Slocock BA
Director of Nursery business; former President of the Horticultural Trade Association 1967-70; member of the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society since 1984; Chairman of the BSI Committee for Nursery Stock Production.

Mr. Michael E. G. Taylor FCIT
Former Managing Director of transportation company; currently consultant to firm of parcels carriers; member of Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment, four Road Haulage Association committees and the Advisory Committee on Telecommunications for Small Business.

Mrs. Victoria R. Wakefield
Member of Committee 'A' Royal Horticultural Society; Trustee Royal Botanic Gardens Kew.

Mr. Roy W. Winter RIBA ALI DipArch DipLD
In private practice as a landscape architect; formerly landscape architect to Redditch new town development corporation; now course director of the diploma/MA in landscape architecture at Birmingham polytechnic.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that the maintenance period for landscaping on new schemes should be 36 months and that statutory environmental and heritage bodies should be consulted at the project brief stage of a road proposal.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* It has been our policy for more than 10 years that the maintenance period for landscaping on new schemes should be 36 months. Consultation with the statutory environmental and heritage bodies already begins at a very early stage of scheme development.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make freely available to both statutory and non-statutory objectors to road schemes the recommendations of the landscape advisory committee.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* Committee reports on individual road schemes have for many years been available to any objector at public inquiry. Reports are now available, on request, to any interested party following the announcement of a preferred route.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy that environmental consultants should be appointed as part of the consultancy team on all major schemes at the point at which the head engineering consultant is appointed.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* Before we appoint consultants for major schemes we always ensure that they will have the necessary environmental expertise available.

Minibuses (Accidents)

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 26 February, *Official Report*, column *763*, what are the numbers of minibus passengers and drivers killed and seriously injured in road accidents in Britain in each year since 1989.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* Police reports on personal injury road accidents classify minibuses together with motor caravans. Driver and passenger fatalities and serious casualties in this broad group are shown in table A. Casualties in vehicles with nine to 35 seats in the Hackney taxation class are shown in table B.

Table A
Casualties in vehicle type "Minibuses and Motor Caravans": Police reports

	Driver		Passenger	
	Killed	*Seriously injured*	*Killed*	*Seriously injured*
1989	6	82	22	251
1990	2	79	23	216
1991	2	69	18	189

1. Includes other types of small bus and motor caravans.

Table B
Casualties in Hackney taxation class (9 to 35 seats): estimates based on DVLA data

	Driver		Passenger	
	Killed	*Seriously injured*	*Killed*	*Seriously injured*
1989	1	6	1	67
1990	1	10	3	80
1991	0	18	3	80

1. Excludes non-public service vehicle buses (9-35 seats) which are taxed for private use, and are not separately identifiable.

Driver and Vehicle Office of Information Technology (Sale)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with KPMG Corporate Finance regarding the error in the advertisement for sale of the Driver and Vehicle Office of

Information Technology in the *Financial Times* of Tuesday 16 February; what effect this error will have on the closing date for replies expressing an interest; and what consultations he has had in relation to the impact of the error on the rules of compliance of the European Commission for the advertisement of public procurement contracts in the *Official Journal*.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle *[holding answer 9 March 1993]*: Consultations with KPMG Corporate Finance, and other advisers on the privatisation of DVOIT, have not revealed any error in the *Financial Times* advertisement, so there would be no effect on the closing date for replies, or doubt about compliance with EC requirements.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Justice Act 1988

14. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to amend the Criminal Justice Act 1988; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We keep the workings of this Act under review, but we have no current plans to amend it.

Prison Population

15. **Mr. Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were in prison at the most recent count.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The prison population in England and Wales on Wednesday 10 March was 43,077.

Obscene Publications Acts

16. **Mr. Faber:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he had received concerning the Obscene Publications Act 1964; and what plans he has to seek to amend it.

Mr. Jack: I have received no representations specifically concerning the Obscene Publications Act 1964, which amended the Obscene Publications Act 1959 in order to create an additional offence of possessing an obscene article for publication for gain. We have received a variety of representations on the general subject of obscenity and we are currently considering what improvements might be made in the enforcement of both Acts.

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the text of the letters which have been sent by his Department to representatives of the police inviting their comment on enforcement questions.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 25 February 1993]*: As the hon. Member is aware, the Government are currently considering what measures might be taken to help improve the enforcement of the Obscene Publication Acts 1959 and 1964. This is not a matter for public consultation, but we have sought the views of members of the police service in order to assist in developing policy proposals in this area. We will make the results of our consideration public as soon as possible.

In the meantime, I can confirm that letters have been sent to the chairman of the crime committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers and to the heads of the obscene publications branch of two police forces. These letters sought views about the effectiveness of the provisions of the Obscene Publications Acts 1959 and 1964 about ways which the enforcements of those and other legal provisions relating to pornography might be improved. Correspondents were asked if they were aware of any particular aspects of law which give rise to difficulties, what those difficulties might be and, how widespread they seemed to be; and whether they had any views on how they might be overcome. They were also asked for their assessment of the extent of the problem posed by the availability of obscene material on computer disk and for any views they might have on procedural or legal changes which might alleviate any difficulties experienced in investigating offences involving such material.

Terrorism

17. **Mr. Elletson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about IRA terrorism in mainland Britain.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Government are determined to overcome terrorism in all its forms throughout the United Kingdom. The police have achieved a number of sucesses recently and they have my full support in their continuing efforts to ensure that those responsible for terrorist crime are brought to justice.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the security arrangements for those who are likely to be most at risk from terrorism.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Protective security arrangements are kept under constant review and adjusted as necessary to meet the assessed level of threat.

Immigration Services, Prestwick

18. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received regarding the provision of immigration services at Prestwick airport.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In addition to representations from the hon. Member, my right hon. and learned Friend has received representations from my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie), the hon. Member for Cunninghame, South (Mr. Donohoe), the Lord Younger of Prestwick and the Earl of Selkirk. He has also received representations from the management of PIK, and various local community groups and representative bodies.

Immigration

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received concerning his proposals to change expenditure under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Up to 9 March, some 266 letters had been received. As we have made clear, we remain fully committed to tackling the causes of disadvantage amongst

ethnic minorities and section 11 grant will continue to play a major role in our programme to combat such disadvantage. It is with much regret, therefore, that due to general economic circumstances we shall be unable to sustain the level of expenditure over the next three years which had earlier been planned. We have also made it clear that we are anxious to work closely with local authorities and other interested parties to ensure that the available funding achieves maximum benefit for members of ethnic minorities, and we have invited them to let us have their observations by the end of March.

Electoral Register

19. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he is now in a position to announce changes in the election law in order to increase the numbers on the electoral register; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As I stated in my reply to a question from the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) on 11 February, we have set up a working group of Home Office officials and representatives of electoral registration officers and local authorities to look at all aspects of electoral registration. We shall consider the working group's findings once it has concluded its work.

Juvenile Crime

20. **Mr. Morgan** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has in relation to the reduction of juvenile crime.

Mr. Jack: As my right hon. and learned Friend said in his Statement to the House on 2 March, he and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Education and for Health have drawn up proposals to tackle juvenile crime on a broad front.

For the small hard core of persistent juvenile offenders who commit a disproportionate amount of crime we will be introducing a new secure training order for sentencing the juvenile offender who has not responded to supervision in the community.

23. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if will introduce legislation to allow magistrates to have access to the records of offences committed by juvenile offenders.

Mr. Jack: There is nothing in the existing law which prevents courts having access to the previous convictions of either juvenile or adult offenders.

Violent Crime

21. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives he is currently considering in order to abate the incidence of violent crime; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The Government continue to pursue vigorously their existing policies, the objective of which is to reduce opportunities for violent crime, to ensure that the police have the necessary powers and resources to deter and apprehend violent offenders, to provide the courts with adequate powers to sentence them after conviction and to offer support to victims.

Custodial Sentences

22. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received on the proportion of sentences to be served in custody; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have received representations on all aspects of the sentencing framework introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991, including some about the new arrangements for the release from custody of sentenced prisoners under which no prisoner may now be released before he or she has served at least half of the sentence imposed by the court. The effects of these and other changes, introduced by the Act and brought into effect on 1 October 1992, are still being monitored.

Special Constables

24. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent studies have been made on the establishment of special constables; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: There have been no recent studies on this specific subject. The current publicity campaign, which was launched in 1991, responds to general concern about falling numbers of special constables. In the first year of the campaign numbers increased by 14 per cent. to 18,072 at 31 December 1991.

Crime (Inner-city Estates)

25. **Mr. Fisher:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next plans to meet the chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers to discuss the problems of crime on inner-city estates.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Although my right hon. and learned Friend has no plans to meet the president of ACPO to discuss these particular matters at the moment, I am aware that chief officers of police have put additional resources into dealing with crime on many inner-city estates. This complements, of course, the significant work being undertaken by the government in preventing crime in these areas.

Car Crime

26. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he intends to take to deal with car crime in Staffordshire.

Mr. Jack: The themes of our Car Crime Prevention Year 1992 campaign continue to play a significant part in all police areas in encouraging action to combat car crime. In Staffordshire, the police are engaged in a number of car crime prevention promotional activities and are participating in the national secured car parks initiative. A force-wide vehicle watch scheme is being planned.

30. **Mr. Lester:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from residents of Nottinghamshire about actions taken to help reduce car crime.

Mr. Jack: I receive many representations on car crime from relevant organisations, hon. Members and members of the public, including a number from residents of Nottinghamshire.

27. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on the implementation of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 with regard to the referral of lenient sentences.

Mr. Jack: The power contained in the Act of 1988 under which the Attorney-General may refer to the Court of Appeal sentences which he considers to be unduly lenient is now widely accepted as important and necessary. The careful and discriminating use of this power by successive holders of that office has proved the wisdom of the Government's decision to introduce this provision.

Juvenile Offenders

28. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will review whether police officers have sufficient powers to detain juvenile offenders between the time of arrest and their appearance in court.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend is satisfied with the police powers to detain juveniles. The criteria for transferring juveniles to local authority accommodation will, however, be kept under review.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his proposals on juveniles in care and on juvenile offenders affect schemes like the Children's Society central London project.

Mr. Jack: As my right hon. and learned Friend made clear in his statement to the House on 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *139-42*, his proposals related to a current gap in courts' powers to deal with persistent juvenile offenders. They will complement rather than replace the policy of initially aiming to divert young people from the penal system. The Children's Society closed its central London project in September 1991 but similar schemes, planned by the Children's Society, in Bournemouth, Leeds and Manchester should play an important part in steering troublesome youngsters away from further offending and custody. The Children's Society are one of a number of children's charities with whom the Home Secretary will shortly be meeting to discuss his proposals on juvenile offenders.

Children In Care (Offences)

29. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide that a social services department will not be subject to a fine for acts committed by children in its care unless those acts are the result of proven negligence by the department.

Mr. Jack: The introduction of a power for the court to order a parent or guardian to pay their children's fines reflects the importance which the Government attach to ensuring that parents take responsibility for the behaviour of their children. When a local authority is in the position of a parent, we believe that it is right that the same principle should apply. But the power is permissive. A court is not required to make such an order if it considers that it would be unreasonable to do so in a particular case.

Child Sex Abuse

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the Thai Government concerning the prosecution in the United Kingdom of British tourists found committing child sexual abuse in Thailand; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The Home Secretary (or Home Office) has had no direct discussion with the Thai Government on this matter.

Our courts have no jurisdiction to try those who commit child sexual abuse in Thailand, who properly fall to be dealt with by the Thai authorities under Thai law.

We are willing to assist in this by extraditing British nationals back to Thailand where appropriate, and also by offering other forms of legal assistance under the provisions of the Criminal Justice Act (International Cooperation) Act 1990.

However, I understand that our ambassador in Bangkok has raised our concerns about the problem of prostitution recently with Thai Ministers, including the Prime Minister and the Interior Minister. They have assured him that the Thai Government are looking urgently at ways of combating this problem, particularly as it affects children.

Safer Cities Initiative

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list those cities currently in receipt of safer cities funding, together with the budget for each designated safer city.

Mr. Jack: The following is a list of 20 local authority areas in which safer cities projects have been established, showing the grants budget allocated to each in 1993-94 to support local crime prevention activity:

Project	*Grants budget in 1993-94* £
Birmingham	100,000
Bradford	100,000
Bristol	100,000
Coventry	100,000
Derby	250,000
Hammersmith and Fulham	250,000
Hartlepool	100,000
Hull	100,000
Islington	100,000
Leicester	250,000
Lewisham	100,000
Middlesborough	250,000
Nottingham	100,000
Rochdale	100,000
Salford	100,000
Sunderland	100,000
Tower Hamlets	100,000
Wandsworth	100,000
Wirral	100,000
Wolverhampton	100,000

Home Office funding is due to end in March 1994 for the 16 projects with grants budgets of £100,000. These projects will also have access to a central budget of £500,000 to assist the development of continuing structures for the maintenance of multi-agency crime

prevention work. It is intended that the remaining four projects will continue to receive Home Office funding into 1995-96.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of his plans for crime prevention initiatives outside the scope of the safer cities initiative.

Mr. Jack: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) on 4 March 1993, *Official Report*, cols *274-75*.

Correspondence

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to reply to a letter dated 15 December 1992 from Mr. Rodgers on behalf of the Tyneside engineering branch of MSF with regard to the Winston Silcott case.

Mr. Jack: We have been unable to find any trace of a letter from Mr. Rodgers. My officials have tried to contact him but without success. I would be grateful if he would send me a copy of his letter so that I can ensure that it is dealt with quickly.

Family Perspective and Life Cycle

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in which publication, speech or statement the Department has described how it takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department;

(2) if he will make a statement on how his Department takes account of the family perspective and the life cycle in the targets, activities and statistics of his Department.

Mr. Jack: The objectives, activities and expenditure plans of the Department are set out in the annual report (Cm 2208). Based on what is known from research and statistics, full account is taken of the interests of families in developing and operating a wide range of policies and programmes. These include: crime prevention; penal policy; immigration and nationality; liquor licensing; reducing drugs misuse; and others. Account is taken also of the likely impact on families of policy changes. Through its programme development unit, the Home Office is currently funding projects in a number of local areas to develop innovative approaches to family violence and to work with young people and their families aimed at reducing criminality, from which lessons should be learned and disseminated widely.

Daylight Saving

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to introduce daylight saving.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Our current summer time arrangements already make some daylight saving. As I explained on 30 November in reply to the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood, a review of its own position on summer time by the European Commission may affect the options for our future arrangements—including options for further extension of daylight hours at the end of the day—and we shall bring forward our own proposals when the Commission's approach is clear.

Attacks on Horses

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken to apprehend those who are or have been guilty of mutilating horses; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend shares the abhorrence felt over these vicious attacks. The Hampshire Constabulary has set up a special squad of officers, which is co-operating with other forces, the RSPCA, veterinary surgeons and the Pony Club, in a determined effort to stop these crimes.

Police

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further consultations his Department has undertaken on the future structure of police forces in England and Wales.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend is considering what reforms in police organisation and structure may be needed and will announce his proposals as soon as possible. The interested parties will be consulted before final decisions are reached.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his letter following his answer of 14 January, *Official Report*, column *796*, on civil action which results either in court awards or in out-of-court settlements against Metropolitan police officers, what action was taken against officers involved in the cases where either the settlement or damages amounted to £10,000 or more.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Disciplinary action taken against Metropolitan police officers is a matter for the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis.

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new initiatives he is currently considering to improve equal opportunities within the police force.

Mr. Charles Wardle: HM inspectorate of constabularly continues to monitor the implementation by forces of guidance issued by the Home Office on equal opportunities policies, including career development and staff appraisal systems.

Secure Accommodation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his oral statement of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *139*, (1) if he will outline the regime that will be applied within the secure units;

(2) what estimate he has made of the weekly cost of a place in one of his proposed secure units; and who will meet that cost.

Mr. Jack: As my right hon. and learned Friend indicated in his statement on 2 March, *Official Report*, columns *139-42*, we are now working up detailed plans for the introduction of a new secure training order for persistent juvenile offenders between the ages of 12 and 15. It was intended that this statement should provide a basis for future detailed discussion and consultation with a wide range of interested parties. This process has begun, but it

would be premature at this stage to attempt to describe in detail the regime which will be provided for persons made subject to secure training orders; it is also too early either to estimate or to apportion the weekly cost of a placement made for this purpose.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his statement to the House on 2 March, *Official Report*, column *139*, what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of existing secure facilities for young people.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* The Government have concluded that existing court powers to make use of secure facilities have not proved to be effective in respect of a small group of persistent juvenile offenders. The recently announced decision to introduce a new secure training order reflects that view. The new secure places will build on what has proved most effective among existing and past facilities.

Magistrates Courts

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the figure of £294 million for the costs for magistrates courts identified in his 1992 publication, "Costs of the Criminal Justice System", includes value-added tax.

Mr. Jack: Yes, although only a small proportion of magistrates courts' expenses involves items which attract value added tax.

Defendants (No Fixed Abode)

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many defendants brought before magistrates courts in Greater London were of no fixed abode in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* Information in not collected centrally on the residential status of defendants brought before the magistrates courts in England and Wales.

In 1991, within the Metropolitan police district and the City of London, there were 1,497 defendants prosecuted for begging offences and five for sleeping rought offences under the Vagrancy Act 1824.

Acquired Rights Directive

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library copies of all circulars and other advice issued by his Department concerning the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and the acquired rights directive.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* We have issued no circulars nor general advice concerning the Transfer of Undertakings Regulations 1981 and the Acquired Rights Directive. We have given advice to managers on dealing with staff enquiries and a brief description of the effect of the regulations in introductory guidance for managers but this is internal management guidance which I do not intend to place in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Surplus Food

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *718*, on EC surplus food, when he expects to complete his review of the operation of the distribution scheme in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Curry: After the Easter recess.

Flood Protection

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proposals he has for the funding of flood protection work in the vicinity of Maryport harbour;

(2) if he will carry out a review of flood prevention arrangements in the vicinity of Maryport harbour.

Mr. Curry: In the first instance, it is for the local flood or coastal defence authority concerned to consider the need for works in its area. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food makes grant available towards the cost of schemes which are technically sound, economically worthwhile and environmentally acceptable. In this case, I understand that Allerdale district council has indicated an intention to carry out work in 1993-94 in the Maryport area but as yet no formal application for grant has been received by MAFF. The Ministry is liaising with the council and any scheme put forward will be considered against the criteria mentioned earlier.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what moneys have been spent in West Cumbria on flood protection in the last five years.

Mr. Curry: In the last five years, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has grant aided some £4·7 million of capital expenditure incurred by local authorities and by the National Rivers Authority on flood defence and coast protection schemes in West Cumbria.

Training Board, Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what further representations he has received regarding the future of the agriculture training board in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: Representations have been made direct to Welsh Office both by ATB Cymru and by the national ATB chairman. We intend to make a statement on the future of the ATB shortly.

Area Aid Application Forms

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to how many farmers he intends to distribute the area aid application form in England and Wales; and when he expects to distribute them.

Mr. Curry: The area aid application form, together with an explanatory booklet, will be distributed to some 240,000 farmers in England and Wales. I expect it to be distributed in early April.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how he proposes to treat area aid application forms which are returned incomplete by reason of the inadequacy of Ordnance Survey map data for the farms in question.

Mr. Curry: The rules require farmers to lodge their area aid application forms by 15 May if they are to avoid financial penalty. If, exceptionally, they are genuinely unable to obtain all the mapping data, they will have a little longer provided that the application form including areas and locations of fields is received by 15 May.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will seek an extension of the EC's deadline of 15 May for farmers to return the area aid application form.

Mr. Curry: I have no plans to seek such an extension.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the effect of submitting an incorrect or incomplete area aid application form, before 15 May, on eligibility for area payments of the individuals concerned.

Mr. Curry: There will be an opportunity to correct or complete area aid applications before 15 May.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with the Ordnance Survey on the agency's ability to provide all the map data required by farmers in all parts of the country to complete the area aid application form by 15 May.

Mr. Curry: Officials have had a number of discussions with the Ordnance Survey, both before the mapping requirements were announced in September 1992, and subsequently in relation to the area aid application form.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what special arrangements he is making within his Department to respond to farmers' inquiries to assist them in completing the area aid application form by 15 May.

Mr. Curry: The responsibility for completing the area aid application form rests with individual farmers. The services of the nine regional service centres will, of course, be available to farmers and officials will offer what help they can.

Set-aside Land

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the position of the United Kingdom in order of rank among EC states in respect of the proportion of arable farmers who will have to put land into set-aside; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for this.

Mr. Curry: I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 22 February, *Official Report*, column *472*.

Farmers in all member states must set aside 15 per cent. of the land on which they are claiming arable area payments, unless they join the simplified scheme for small producers. There is no set-aside requirement under the simplified scheme but area payments will only be made at the lowest rate. The majority of United Kingdom farmers are expected to join the main scheme, whereas in some member states a significantly higher proportion of farmers are likely to choose the simplified scheme.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Heating

Ms Walley: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will give details of the current heating maintenance undertaken by the engineers department; and what changes there have been in the last 12 months.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms, and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Ms Walley: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will give details of when the heating is turned on and off in each of the workplaces in the Palace of Westminster; and how many complaints have been received in each of the last 12 months relating to heating.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms, and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Light Fittings

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how many infra-red detectors have been attached to light fittings in the Palace of Westminster to save electricity costs; what was the cost; and what is the country of manufacture.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms, and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Great Clock (Maintenance)

Mr. Mudie: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what maintenance work is to be undertaken on the Great Clock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ray Powell: The Director of Works advises that routine inspection has revealed the need to replace a gear wheel on the chiming mechanism. This work will mean that the chimes of the Great Clock will be silenced for about eight weeks, commencing on 15 March. The hour strike will be unaffected.

Engineers Department

Ms Walley: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, how many stokers have been removed from the jobs of routine heating maintenance in the last year.

Mr. Beith: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Ms Walley: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will list all the employment changes which have taken place in the engineers department, including redundancies, relocations and changes in working conditions.

Mr. Beith: This is a matter for the Serjeant at Arms and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

DEFENCE

Export Contracts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the conclusions reached by the conference jointly organised on 24 February by his Department's Defence Export Services Organisation and the Electronics Engineering Association on *(a)* United Kingdom and *(b)* international export contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: I have nothing to add to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 8 March, *Official Report*, column *448*.

Inflatable Model Tanks

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by *(a)* date, *(b)* location and *(c)* cost, for the last 24 months, the number of inflatable tanks that have been stolen; how many have been recovered; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 12 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *318*.

Anti-ballistic Missiles (Defence System)

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to reach a decision on United Kingdom participation in an anti-ballistic missile defence system.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I have nothing to add to the answer that my hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement gave to the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Smith) on 11 November, *Official Report*, column *821*.

Vulcan Bomber

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of training flights in the Vulcan bomber since September 1992; and what is the estimated cost of keeping the Vulcan in a flightworthy condition until September 1993.

Mr. Aitken: The additional cost of operating and maintaining the aircraft between 20 September 1992 (the date of its last display) and 26 February 1993 (its most recent flight) was approximately £3,600. The Vulcan would require a major service to continue display flying. This would cost at least £2·5 million and the aircraft would not be available for the 1993 display season.

Publicity

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 2 June 1992 to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), *Official Report*, columns *538-40*, what is his Department's *(a)* current outturn estimate for publicity expenditure for 1992-93 and *(b)* budgeted publicity expenditure for 1993-94.

Mr. Archie Hamilton *[holding answer 25 February 1993]:* My Department's current outturn estimate for 1992-93 and provisional budget for 1993-94 for centrally controlled expenditure on advertising, broken down into media categories, and on other promotional material are as follows:

£ million

	1992-93	*1993-94*
Television advertising	2·521	2·872
Radio advertising	0·001	Nil
Newspaper advertising	8·375	9·594
Other promotional material	4·577	5·114
Total	15·474	17·580

In addition, the outturn estimate of publicity expenditure (excluding staff and operating costs) by MOD press and public relations for 1992-93 is £2·98 million and the provisional budget for 1993-94 is £2·93 million broken down as follows:

£ million

	1992-93	*1993-94*
Films/TV	0·298	0·558
Exhibitions and displays	0·876	0·894
Publications	0·788	0·668
Equipment	0·152	0·104
Miscellaneous items	0·870	0·688

EMPLOYMENT

Deregulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will list consultants advising her Department on the deregulation of the labour market.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department does not employ consultants to advise on the deregulation of the labour market. Consultation with a wide range of interested parties is carried out for individual deregulatory measures. In addition, the new deregulation task forces will examine interdepartmental deregulation issues, including those affecting the labour market.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what estimate she has made of the number of job vacancies registered with jobcentres as a result of the drive she announced on 13 August 1992.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. M. Fogden to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 11 March 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question about the number of vacancies notified to Jobcentres as a result of her announcement on 13 August 1992. This falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

The national employer advertising campaign was designed to promote positive messages about ES services, and was aimed particularly at employers who had not used ES services before or in recent years. The intention was to attract vacancies from employers for our unemployed clients.

For the 1992-93 year from April 1992 to 5 February 1993 the total number of vacancies notified was 1,673,413 (90.3 per cent of the previous year).

Vacancies Notified

(Vacancy Date of Return)	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
September	211,562	164,046
October	183,830	184,774
November	204,396	203,211
December	148,880	154,993
January	78,492	105,984
TOTALS	827,160	813,008

It can be seen that there was a marginal reduction in the vacancies notified. This is disappointing but not really surprising when set against the current economic climate. Feedback from my offices around the country suggests that there has been a high proportion of contracts from new or lapsed employer users during the campaign. We hope that when employers start recruiting again the goodwill generated by the campaign will encourage them to give their vacancies to Jobcentres.

Regular tracking research has been carried out amongst employers. Employers were interviewed before and after the first phase of the campaign in the autumn of 1992.

Results showed that we achieved a significant improvement in employer attitudes:

Jobcentres were the only major source of recruitment to experience an increase in usage;

employer usage of Jobcentres rose by 4 per cent.—from 63 to 67 per cent.;

15 per cent. of non users said they were more likely to use Jobcentres having seen an advertisement;

attitudes towards Jobcentres improved.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Burt: The following services have been contracted out without market testing an in-house bid:

Service	*Contractor*
Benefits Agency	
Travel services to the Department	Wagons-Lite
Child Support Agency	
Customer Services Training	Coopers and Lybrand
Specialist Interviewing Skills	Relate
Facilities Management Dudley Centre	Procord Ltd
Facilities Management Falkirk Centre	Drake and Scull Technical Services
Security and Reception Dudley Centre	Security Express Guards
Security and Reception Falkirk Centre	Centuryan Security Ltd
Catering Dudley Centre	Gardener Merchant
Day Care Nursery Dudley Centre	Kinderquest Ltd
Day Care Nursery Hastings Centre	Kinderquest Ltd
Typing and Secretarial Falkirk Centre	Manpower PLC
Messenger/Telephonists Falkirk Centre	Manpower PLC

No in-house bid was invited for Benefits Agency travel services because the few clerical staff involved could not provide the professional, accredited, national travel service to the Department for which tenders were being sought.

The child support agency, which will be operational from April 1993, is a completely new agency and services have been contracted out where in-house operations did not exist. Customer services training was contracted out because limited capacity was available in-house to develop and deliver the service required in the time available.

Invalidity Benefit

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women aged 60 years and over have had the amount of invalidity benefit reduced on reaching the retirement age of 60 years in the latest year for which figures are available.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is not available. For women aged 60-64, the rate of invalidity benefit (IVB) is based on their retirement pension entitlement. This may be higher or lower than the previous rate of IVB. As at 30 March 1991, the latest date for which figures are available, 37,100 women between 60 and 64 were assessed for invalidity benefit at their pension rate.

Source: Information from a 1 per cent. sample of claimants as at 30 March 1991.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will update his reply of 16 March 1992, *Official Report*, column *896*, of his estimate of the number of households, by tenure, whose housing benefit is reduced because of non-dependants' deductions, sub-divided into *(a)* those aged 16 and 17 years, *(b)* 18 to 24 years, and *(c)* 25 years and over.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table:

Claimants whose housing benefit is reduced through non-dependant deductions: May 1991

Age of claimant	*LA tenants*	*Private tenants*	*Total*
(i) Housing benefit cases where income support is payable			
16-17	—	0	—
18-24	7,000	1,000	8,000
25 and over	173,000	27,000	200,000
(ii) Housing benefit only cases			
16-17	0	0	0
18-24[1]	—	—	—
25 and over	137,000	16,000	153,000
(iii) All cases			
16-17	—	0	—
18-24	7,000	1,000	8,000
25 and over	310,000	44,000	353,000

[1] Indicates less than 500 cases.

Source: The Housing Benefit and Community Charge Benefit Management Information System annual 1 per cent. sample for May 1991. Figures are rounded.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review tariff income levels for capital resources over £3,000 when assessing entitlement to housing benefit and community charge benefit.

Mr. Scott: Although these levels are kept under review, we have no plans to change the present arrangements.

Child Support Act 1991

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what arrangements he has made to exempt women resident in refuges for battered women from having to go through Child Support Act 1991 procedures in order to give evidence that harm and undue distress may result from the fathers of their children being pursued for maintenance.

Mr. Burt: Where a parent with care is in a women's refuge, this in itself will be sufficient to demonstrate that she has good cause to fear that she or her children may be harmed. However, it would be wrong to have a blanket exemption from the procedures of the Act for particular groups since some mothers may wish to pursue maintenance notwithstanding the circumstances surrounding the breakdown of their relationship. Each case will therefore be dealt with individually, but staff will be sensitive to the concerns of the parent with care and in no circumstances would her whereabouts be revealed to the father.

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons without accommodation were income support recipients in England at May 1991 and at the latest available date, breaking down the figures by age and by whether or not they were unemployed at the time.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information is in the table. It is not possible to provide figures which distinguish between those without accommodation for a significant period and those who may be only temporarily so.

Income Support recipients
Persons without accommodation (England)

Age of claimant	*Total*	*Unemployed*	*Other*
16-19	700	400	300
20-29	4,900	4,800	100
30-39	1,500	1,200	300
40-49	900	900	—
50-59	600	400	200
Total	8,600	7,700	900

Notes:
1. Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry, May 1991.
2. All figures rounded to the nearest hundred.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons without accommodation were income support recipients at May 1991, and at the latest available date, in Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Kingston upon Hull, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nottingham, Oxford, Plymouth, Sheffield, Southampton, Stoke on Trent and each London borough.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr Michael Bichard, chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what communication he has received from a constituent of the hon. Member for Woolwich, national insurance No. YZ 83 86 39B; when it was received; and what was his response.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. John Austin-Walker, dated 10 March 1993

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking "what communication he has received from a constituent of the honourable Member for Woolwich, NI. No. YZ838639B; when it was received; and what was his response."

It may help if I explain that correspondence addressed to Ministers or the Chief Executive from customers concerning their individual circumstances is referred to the appropriate District Office for investigation and response.

Your constituent has addressed a number of such letters which have been passed to the appropriate. District for response. The papers in this case show without doubt that there has been unacceptable delay in the issuing of responses to your constituent. Indeed, more generally, it is very clear that the service provided by the Agency's office fell well short of the standard your constituent had every right to expect. For this I offer my sincere apologies.

District management has now contacted your constituent regarding his enquiries and apologised for the delay. A full summary of Income Support paid has been sent to him and a meeting with the Agency's Customer Service Manager, is to be arranged, to resolve any remaining issues.

I do regret the unsatisfactory standard of service that your constituent has received and add my apologies to those provided already. I trust that the response provided and any meeting with the Customer Services Manager will bring the issues to a satisfactory conclusion. I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *113*, how many redundant workers have been refused income support by the Chesterfield and Worksop benefits agency within the past year under the deprivation of capital regulations after paying off part or all of their mortgage.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and copies will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Harry Barnes, dated 10 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking, pursuant to his Answer of 2 March, column 113, how many redundant workers have been refused Income Support by the Chesterfield and Worksop Benefits Agency within the past year under the deprivation of capital regulations after paying off part or all of their mortgage.

The complete range of information requested could only be obtained at a disproportionate cost. This is because statistics relating to the reason that benefit is refused are not normally collected.

However, information relating to British Coal redundancies, where former workers have been refused Income Support on grounds of deprivation of resources, has been collected nationally since November 1992. I am therefore able to let you know that, since 16 November 1992, there have been a total of five refusals on these grounds. All of these have been made at the Chesterfield and Worksop Benefits Agency offices.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by year for the last five years *(a)* the number of people employed by grade and *(b)* the annual cost of the contributory benefits section at his Department's offices at Castle house, Doncaster, classified by (i) sickness benefit, (ii) invalidity benefit, (iii) severe disablement allowance and (iv) maternity benefit.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency and he will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 10 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will list by year for the last five years *(a)* the number of people employed by grade and *(b)* the annual costs of the Contributory Benefits Section at his Department's offices at Castle House, Doncaster; classified by (i) sickness benefit, (ii) invalidity benefit, (iii) severe disablement allowance and (iv) maternity benefit.

For operational reasons it is not possible to identify separately staff on sickness benefit and invalidity benefit or between severe disablement allowance and maternity benefit because the work is merged within staff sections. Figures are also only available for 1991-92 and 1992-93 since the Benefits Agency was formed.

The information available is set out below:

Sickness and Invalidity Benefit

Year		
1991-92		
Staff	LO1	5.5
Staff	LO2	17.5
Staff	AA	3.0
Total Cost		£306,000
1992-93		
Staff	LO1	5.5
Staff	LO2	22.5
Staff	AA	3.0
Total Cost		£366,000

Severe Disablement Allowance and Maternity Benefit—1991-92 and 1992-93.

LO2 1.5 staff at a cost of £17,000.

Note: All totals are rounded to the nearest £1,000.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Pensions

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the savings to the national insurance fund if both men and women started to receive the state retirement pension at *(a)* 65 years, *(b)* 66 years, *(c)* 67 years, *(d)* 68 years, *(e)* 69 years and *(f)* 70 years.

Miss Widdecombe: On the same basis as the estimates set out in the discussion documents, "Options for Equality in State Pension Age", the savings to the national insurance fund from equalising state pension age at 65 and 67 are as follows:

	2025	*2035*
Age 65	5·1	4·3
Age 67	9·3	8·5

Estimates for the remaining ages are not available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the proportion of pensioners receiving income from occupational pensions identified as *(a)* all pensioners, *(b)* single male pensioners aged under 75 years, *(c)* single female pensioners aged under 75 years, *(d)* pensioner couples aged under 75 years, *(e)* single female pensioners aged 75 years or over, *(f)* single male pensioners aged 75 years or over and *(g)* couples where at least one partner is aged 75 years or over, and the median amount received.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates for 1989—the latest year for which information is available—are in the table.

	Per cent. with income from occupational pension	*Median occupational pension for those in receipt £ per week*
All pensioner units	56	27·20
Single male pensioners aged under 75	58	23·10
Single female pensioners aged under 75	59	27·40
Pensioner couples where both are aged under 75	77	35·90
Single female pensioners aged 75 or over	30	14·40
Single male pensioners aged 75 or over	50	21·80
Pensioner couples where at least one is aged 75	64	30·80

Notes:

1. Estimates are based on the 1989 Family Expenditure Survey and the 1987 GAD Survey of Occupational Pensions.
2. A pensioner unit is defined to be a single person aged above State Pensionable Age (SPA) or a couple where the head is aged above SPA.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what impact denial of unemployment benefit to persons over the age of 55 years due to interaction with pension provision has on unemployment statistics.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply on 10 March 1993 to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon).

War Pensions

Mr. Michael Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to increase war pensions.

Miss Widdecombe: An amendment order, which increases in line with the retail prices index, war pensions

and allowances in respect of ex-service men and women, and which introduces some changes which will help simplify the scheme, was made yesterday by the Privy Council. The order will be laid before Parliament for information on 22 March. Legislation to make similar amendments to the scheme for civilians was laid today. The main element of the changes is that, in addition to the uprating from 12 April, the basic war disablement pension has been increased by £5 a week; this change will result in considerable cash gains for some 200,000 pensioners.

Order Books

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) if he will give the cost of issuing a Department of Social Security additional order book;

(2) in what circumstances additional order books are issued in respect of one payment only; how many have been issued in the last 12 months in respect of payments of 35 pence or less; and what consideration is given to incorporating such payments into the main order book.

Mr. Burt: The administration and payments of benefits is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Ms Joan Walley, dated 10 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what is the cost of issuing a Department of Social Security additional order book; in what circumstances additional order books are issued in respect of one payment only; how many have been issued in the last 12 months in respect of payments of 35 pence or less; and what consideration is given to incorporating such payments into the main order book.

Additional order books in respect of one payment only are sometimes necessary in connection with the uprating announcement.

Order books normally cover a period of 20 weeks and renewal books are issued some 4 or 5 weeks in advance of the first order. If uprating details are not available when books are prepared, any which span the uprating date will not include the new rates. When the uprating date coincides with the date of the last order in an order book, an additional book covering just one payment is necessary.

Normally, the number of additional books issued with one order is negligible but the date of the latest uprating announcement was such that a more significant number of additional Child Benefit books were issued. It is estimated that the number of order books issued in the last 12 months for payments of 35p or less is 110,000.

The decision to issue additional order books rather than include arrears in the next main book was based on customer service and economic grounds.

Issue of the additional book ensured that the correct rate of benefit was available to all customers on the due date. The child benefit computer system already has in place a facility to issue additional order books in such circumstances and to introduce a facility to include the increase in the next renewal book would have involved substantial computer reprogramming costs.

The estimated cost of issuing, centrally, an additional order book is estimated, from the latest available data, to be approximately 2p (two pence), plus the cost of second class postage. There are no figures currently available for the cost of a locally produced additional order book.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by year for the last five years *(a)* the number of persons employed by grade and *(b)* the annual cost of the pensions section at his Department's offices in Castle house, Doncaster, classified by (i) income support pension, (ii) retirement pension, (iii) widow's benefit and (iv) death grant.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, who will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 10 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to the points raised in your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will list by year for the last five years *(a)* the number of persons employed by grade and *(b)* the annual cost of the Pensions Section at his Department's offices in Castle House, Doncaster, classified by (i) income support pension, (ii) retirement pension, (iii) widow's benefit and (iv) death grant.

For operational reasons it is not possible to identify separately staff on Retirement Pensions and Widow's Benefit because the work is merged within staff sections and figures are not available on the Death Grant because it has been abolished.

The figures available are only for 1991-1992 and 1992-93 since the Benefits Agency was formed.

The information available is set out below:

Year		
Retirement Pension and Widow's Benefit		
1991-92		
Staff	LO1	1
Staff	LO2	4
Staff	AA	1
Total cost		£69,000
1992-93		
Staff	LO1	1
Staff	LO2	6
Staff	AA	1
Total cost		£92,000
Income Support Pensions		
1991-92		
Staff	LO1	0·5
Staff	LO2	2
Total cost		£30,000
1992-93		
Staff	LO1	0·5
Staff	LO2	2
Total cost		£31,000

Note: All costings are subject to rounding to the nearest £1,000.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

HEALTH

Elderly People (Care)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance she has given to district health authorities regarding the contracting out of continuing elderly care; and if she will make a statement;

(2) how many health authorities have contracted out the provision of continuing elderly care in the last year; and if she will list them, stating the number of patients affected.

Mr. Yeo: In purchasing continuing care, health authorities are expected to consider the whole range of available services, including those in the independent sector. The extent of such provision, including any purchased from independent providers, is a matter for individual health authorities to determine in the light of local needs and priorities.

Cannabis

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to investigate the use of cannabis for certain medical conditions.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Women

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of women doctors were obstetricians and gynaecologists in each of the last five years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is set out in the table.

Women doctors (whole time equivalent England)

	All hospital doctors	*Obstetricians and Gynaecologists*	*Obstetricians and gynaecologists as percentage of all hospital doctors*
1987	9,049·9	805·5	8·9
1988	9,693·3	907·8	9·4
1989	10,126·6	912·8	9·0
1990	10,736·3	954·5	8·9
1991	11,232·8	1,000·9	8·9

Dental Treatment

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average cost of dental treatment in *(a)* the north west and *(b)* England for the latest year for which figures are available.

Dr. Mawhinney: The table shows the average payments for registered patients in the general dental services (GDS) in 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available.

	Gross payments 1991-92 in £ million[1]	*Number of patients registered at 30 September 1991*[2]	*Average gross payments 1991-92 per registered patient £*
North western region	108·20	1,881,311	57·51
England	1,210·06	21,570,226	56·10

Notes:

[1] The total of payments scheduled by the Dental Practice Board in respect of child and adult items of servie fees, continuing care and capitation payments, and weighted entry payments. Taken together, these payments represent about 95 per cent. of the total gross cost of the GDS. The figures include charge income collected from patients.

[2] The figures do not include patients who received "occasional treatment", that is, without registering with the dentist.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists are in practice in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* the north-west standard region and *(c)* England who (i) take NHS patients, (ii) take private patients only and (iii) until 1990 took NHS patients but no longer do so.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information in not held centrally. The table shows the number of national health service dentists by family health service authority (FHSA), regional health authority (RHA) and for England as a whole.

	30 September 1990	*30 September 1992*
Lancashire FHSA	400	421
North West RHA	1,232	1,258
England	15,480	15,411

Dentists are independent contractors and are free to practice privately if they wish. Information is not held about those who decide to do so.

Prescription Errors

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the information held by her Department on the scale of general practitioners prescribing errors, together with the response of her Department.

Dr. Mawhinney This information is not collected.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the drugs in the British National Formulary containing chlorofluorocarbons.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available in the form requested but records held by the Medicines Control Agency show there are 119 products containing chlorofluorocarbons, licensed under the Medicines Act for human use at present. A small number, which are listed, contain chlorofluorocarbons as active ingredients including inhalational and anaesthetic agents.

The remainder of the licensed products (104) contain chlorofluorocarbons used as excipients usually in the form of a propellant.

It is not normal practice to disclose excipients since to do so could prejudice companies' commercially sensitive information which they are required to provide to obtain a product licence.

Product licences with chlorofluorocarbons as active

Product Licence No.	*Product Name*	*Licence Holder*
00189/0018	Deep freeze aerosol spray	Mentholatum Co. Ltd.
00327/5910R	PR freeze spray (liquid aerosol)	Crookes Healthcare Ltd.
00347/0001	Pain relief spray	Aerosols International Ltd.
00424/0068	Spreeze aerosol (formerly Relcram aerosol)	Tillott JB Ltd. T/A Tillotts Laboratories
00457/0010	Stingo (aerosol spray)	Potter and Clarke Ltd.

Product Licence No.	Product Name	Licence Holder
00484/0009R	Astroplast burn spray	Dalmuir Trading Co. Ltd.
00504/5001R	Ultrakool aerosol spray	Wallace Cameron and Co. Ltd.
03873/0003	Gola freeze spray	Gola Sports Ltd.
08313/0030	Pharmaethyl (pressurised gas—aerosol presentation)	Deproco UK Ltd.
10655/0001	Burnzap	Health Foundation Ltd.
00029/5058R	Fluothane	Imperial Chemical Industries PLC
00037/0053	Ethrane or Enflurane (generic name)	Abbott Laboratories Ltd.
00037/0115	Forane or Isoflurane (generic name)	Abbott Laboratories Ltd.
02240/0001	Isoflurane	I S C Chemicals Ltd.
05247/0001	Alyrane (nonflammable liquid)	Anaquest Ltd.

Passive Smoking

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects the leaflet on passive smoking to become available again.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are four main booklets concerning passive smoking—the Department of the Environment's "Code of Practice on Smoking in Public Places"; the Health and Safety Executive's booklet "Passive Smoking at Work"; a booklet "Passive Smoking A Health Hazard" produced by a coalition of statutory and voluntary organisations; and "Passive Smoking Questions and Answers", published by the Health Education Authority (HEA).

The first three booklets are in print and copies are available from the Library. The HEA booklet "Passive Smoking Questions and Answers" is currently being reprinted and will be available again shortly. A copy will be placed in the Library.

Hospital Meals

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she issues to national health service management regarding the minimal nutritional standards of meals in hospitals; what monitoring there is of in-patient meals to see whether they meet nutritional criteria; and when the guidelines were last reviewed.

Mr. Sackville: None. Hospitals and other national health service units are required to ensure that adequate meals are provided and that they meet the nutritional requirements of all their patients.

Aycliffe Secure Unit

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the results of the inquiry into the Aycliffe local authority secure unit, the number of visits her inspectors have made to this unit in the last two years and the conclusions they reached; and how many children from Newcastle upon Tyne have been placed in the unit.

Mr. Yeo: Durham area child protection committee inquired into a number of allegations of child abuse at Aycliffe community home in 1992 and produced a report of their findings which was published in November 1992.

Formal inspections of Aycliffe were carried out by the social services inspectorate in March and July 1989 and in March 1991. Reports on these inspections were published in 1990 and 1991. Copies are available in the Library. A further visit, not resulting in a published report, to review the findings of the earlier inspections was made in March 1992.

Others visits are made to units such as Aycliffe. They are not inspections or assessments of practice and no reports are published.

Information about placements of children by local authorities in individual secure units is in the annual statistical publication "Children Accommodated in Secure Units during the year ending 31 March", copies of which are available in the Library.

Health Education Authority Leaflets

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what charges are made for Health Education Authority leaflets.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Health Education Authority's policy is to produce and distribute leaflets free of charge to the general public, through local health promotion units, to general practitioners' waiting rooms for example. Charges on a cost-recovery basis only are made to non-national health service organisations seeking bulk orders.

Local Authority Homes

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what will be the payment made to voluntary and private sector residential and nursing homes for the aged made in respect of individual residents each week from 1 April;

(2) what account she takes of the capital costs incurred by private and voluntary sector residential care and nursing homes in calculating the payments for the care of residents in those homes.

Mr. Yeo: The price paid by local authorities for places in residential care and nursing homes is a matter for negotiation between the homes and authorities locally.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what will be the payment to local authority homes for the aged made in respect of individual residents each week from 1 April;

(2) what account she takes of the capital costs incurred in construction of local authorities' residential care homes in calculating the payments for the care of residents in those homes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Each local social services authority sets a standard rate for the provision of residential care in its own homes which it is required to seek to recover from each resident, subject to their ability to pay. The standard rate takes into account local factors, including capital expenditure, and is based upon a formula produced by the local authority associations. From 1 April 1993 local authorities will be required, by section 22(2) of the National Assistance Act 1948, to set the standard rate at an amount which represents the full cost to the authority

of providing the accommodation. In addition to income from charges, resources for local social services authorities for these purposes are available through the revenue support grant, the business rate and the council tax, when introduced.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list the research currently being funded by her Department on the incidence of mental disorder in ethnic minority groups;

(2) what research is being funded by her Department into the provision of mental health services to meet the needs of black and ethnic minority communities.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) on 23 February at column *544*.

Psychotropic Medicines

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of prescriptions for psychotropic medicines were issued to women in the last available year.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information is not held centrally on the gender of patients for whom prescriptions are issued.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the Government are taking to ensure that users of mental health services are actively involved in discussions about who should be their care manager.

Mr. Yeo: The White Paper, "Caring for People" stresses the importance of consulting mentally ill people, their relatives and carers about their care. The "Caring for People" policy guidance (HMSO ISBN 0 11 321338 7) specifies that the individual service user, and with his or her agreement any carers, should be involved throughout the assessment and care management process.

The "Health of the Nation" mental illness key area handbook for health and social services managers published in January this year gives managers practical advice on involving users and seeking their views. Copies of all the documents are available in the Library.

Hospital Travel Costs

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the hospital travel costs scheme was established; what are the arrangements for payments to claimants; and what records there are of the number of claimants for travel costs under the scheme for each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: There have been arrangements for the reimbursement of national health service travel costs to hospital since 1948. Under the current scheme, which has been in place since 1988, assistance with the costs of travel to hospital for treatment is available to patients on income support or family credit or who are otherwise assessed to be on a low income. Patients who can demonstrate entitlement are usually able to obtain their travel expenses at the hospital when they attend for treatment; otherwise payment is subject to confirmation of entitlement. Information on the number of claims made is not held centrally.

Low Income Scheme

Mrs. Lait: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes are planned in the future administration of the NHS low income scheme and the health benefits unit.

Dr. Mawhinney: The future of the health benefits unit at Newcastle which assesses claims for charge remission under the national health service low income scheme has been under consideration for some time in parallel with a wide ranging review of the scheme itself. I have now concluded that the best option for improving administration is to transfer responsibility for the scheme to the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA), a special health authority within the NHS. This transfer will take effect on 1 April 1993. Some 360 Department of Social Security (DSS) staff currently employed at the unit and who handle approximately 1·2 million claims per annum on behalf of the Department of Health will be seconded to the PPA from that date. Thereafter, they will be given the opportunity either to transfer to the NHS on a permanent basis or return to DSS as vacancies arise. There are no plans for either voluntary or compulsory redundancy. DSS Ministers have agreed the planned transfer.

Transferring responsibility to the PPA generates significant opportunities for improving the administration of the scheme, and will enable progress to be made towards computerisation of both record keeping and the claims assessment process. The extent to which the recommendations made following the review of the scheme's administration, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health announced on 22 May 1991, might contribute to these opportunities is receiving careful study. In reaching final decisions we shall need to take account of current public expenditure constraints, but I hope to make a further announcement soon.

Arrangements have been made with the Scottish and Welsh Offices that claims from these countries should, for the present, continue to be handled by the PPA.

National Blood Authority

Mr. Ian Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in establishing the national blood authority.

Mr. Sackville: I have today laid before the House an order to establish the national blood authority from 1 April 1993. From that date it will replace the Central Blood Laboratories Authority and the national directorate of the National Blood Transfusion Service. We propose that the new authority should assume responsibility for managing the regional transfusion centres from 1 April 1994.

I am pleased to announce that Mr. Lawrence Banks, a director of Robert Fleming Holdings Limited and Mr. Dennis Allison, general manager of the North Western regional health authority have agreed to serve as non-executive members of the new national blood authority. Mr. John Adey, former managing director of Baxter Healthcare Ltd, has been appointed to be the chief executive of the new authority. Additional appointments will be made shortly.

Medical Advisers

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total number of family health service authority medical advisers in post; and what is the total salary cost for the financial year 1991-92 and the projected cost for the current financial year.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave him on 10 March 1993.

Suicide

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many suicides there have been by *(a)* women and *(b)* women in rural areas in each year since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The exact information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information for the years 1979, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989 and 1991 however are available and are shown in the table.

Number of female suicides and undetermined deaths[1] (E950-E959, E980-E989 combined) in England and Wales and, in remoter, largely rural areas (normal area of residence) for the years 1979, 1983, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1991.

	England and Wales	Rural areas
1979	2,335	207
1983	2,109	195
1985	2,170	214
1987	1,859	195
1989	1,686	179
1991	1,585	153

[1] Undetermined deaths (whether accidentally or purposely inflicted).

One of the ways in which OPCS classifies areas is in terms of an urban/rural distinction. County districts are classified in the following groups.

Greater London:
- Inner London
- Outer London

Metropolitan Districts:
- Principal Cities
- Others

Non-Metropolitan:
- Cities
- Industrial
- With new towns
- Resort and seaside retirement
- Mixed urban rural
- Remoter largely rural

Further details are available in appendix 5 of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publication "Key population and vital statistics" series VS no.17, PP1 no.13; a copy of which is in the Library.

Health Promotion Clinics

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health promotion clinics were functioning on 1 June 1992; what was their annual cost; and if she will publish a breakdown of the services and therapies being provided through those clinics at that time.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information on the number of health promotion clinics is not collected centrally in the form requested. The number of claims made by partnerships in England for health promotion clinic sessions in the preceding 12 months at 1 April 1992 was 1,331,277. The forecast total expenditure on health promotion clinics in 1992-93 is £74·448 million. Information on services and therapies provided through health promotion clinics are not collected centrally.

Insulin Needles

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she has completed her Department's consideration of the supply of suitable needles on NHS prescription for pen-type insulin injections.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on 10 March.

Private Sector Finance

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all those NHS projects which have been financed by private sector money over the last 12 months; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Measures announced by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the autumn statement will increase the scope for national health service use of private finance to improve and extend services. We aim to ensure that NHS patients will benefit from these new freedoms to the greatest possible extent. NHS directors of finance have been encouraged to use private finance if this is cost-effective.

NHS projects using private finance need approval by the Department of Health and the Treasury if the capital assets involved have a value of £250,000 or more. Projects which have been approved in the last 12 months are shown in the table.

NHS projects using private capital worth over £0·25 million approved in the 12 months to end of February 1993

1. Sheffield Northern General Hospital NHS Trust: contracting for the provision of satellite dialysis facilities at Rotherham Hospital.
2. NHS Supplies Authority: lease of offices for HQ in Reading.
3. NHS Supplies Authority: lease of offices for North East Divisional HQ in Harrogate.
4. Newcastle Royal Victoria Infirmary NHS Trust: lease of magnetic resonance imager.
5. Standing Committee on Postgraduate Medical Education: lease of offices in London.
6. South East London Commissioning Agency: lease of offices in London.
7. King's College Hospital, Camberwell: new clinical waste incineration facilities.
8. The Royal Oldham Hospital NHS Trust: new clinical waste incineration facilities.
9. Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust: proposed joint venture patient hotel.

Nursing and Midwifery Board

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the present members of the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting.

Mr. Sackville: Present members of the English National Board for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Visiting are as follows:

Mr. R. G. Adams
Prof. J. A. Akinsanya
Mr. C. J. Allison
Mrs. A. Ashton
Mr. R. D. Atlay
Mrs. C. Atwell

Ms B. S. Bailey
Miss S. Barlow
Mrs. Y. E. Baxter
Miss J. A. Beak
Mrs. A. P. Burrows
Mrs. J. A. Byrne
Ms V. Chapman
Mrs. C. A. Christophe
Mrs. J. M. Collacott
Mrs. L. Cutler
Ms E. Davenhall
Ms S. Downe
Ms H. Foale
Mrs E. H. Fradd
Miss C. Gilling
Mrs. J. Green
Ms M. Gribbin
Mr. A. Grocott
Ms W. E. R. Harris
Mr. S. J. Holder
Prof. J. E. Hooper, CBE
Miss N. Hunt
Miss B. I. Hyde
Mr. J. James
Mr. K. Jarrold
Ms R. Lowe
Mr. J. McIntegart
Mrs. S. Moore
Ms G. D. Quick
Miss S. E. G. Roch
Prof. P. Seager
Mr. P. Tuddenham
Prof. A. L. Webb
Prof. J. Wilson-Barnett
Mrs. L. S. Worthington
Dr. P. Yerrell

Drinamyl

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information has been received, and what guidance has been issued, by her Department regarding the side-effects of the drug, Drinamyl.

Dr. Mawhinney: Drinamyl is the proprietary name for a product containing dexamphetamine and amylobarbitone. This was indicated for mild temporary emotional disturbances but was withdrawn from the market in 1978. The Committee on Safety of Medicines received nine reports of suspected adverse reactions to Drinamyl. A report of a suspected adverse reaction does not necessarily mean that the reaction was caused by the drug. The most important side effects of Drinamyl are dependence and psychosis, and the abuse potential of this type of drug is well recognised. The Department has not issued any specific guidance about the side-effects of Drinamyl.

General Practitioners

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was *(a)* the total number of general practitioners and the whole-time equivalent and *(b)* the total number of, and the amount paid to, general practitioners receiving deprivation payments in each of the low, medium and high categories for 1991-92 and 1993-94; and what are the comparable figures in each case for fund holding general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: *(a)* The total number of general practitioners and the whole time equivalents for England in 1991-92 and 1992-93 is as follows:

	Number of GPs	*Whole Time Equivalent*
1 October 1991	25,686	25,039·05
1 April 1992	25,823	25,108·25

(b) The total number of GPs receiving deprivation payments in each of the low, medium and high categories in England for 1991-92 and 1992-93 is as follows:

	Low	*Medium*	*High*	*Total*
1 October 1991	10,035	6,200	4,272	11,485
1 April 1992	10,363	6,431	4,584	11,833

It is possible for a GP to have patients in a combination of deprived areas. The sum of the three areas is not, therefore, equal to the total number of GPs. The figure given in the "Total" column is the number of GPs with patients in any deprived area.

The total amounts of deprivation payments in each of these categories for 1991-92 is as follows:

	£
Lower	8,341,614·68
Medium	8,749,245·27
High	13,803,269·91

Notes:
Figures are not yet available for 1992-93.
Separate figures are not available for fundholding GPs.

Tobacco Advertising

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the total number and list the names of those organisations and individuals who have made submissions *(a)* in favour of a tobacco advertising ban and *(b)* against a tobacco advertising ban, in relation to the publication "Effect of Tobacco Advertising on Tobacco Consumption", a discussion document reviewing the evidence.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* Comments were invited on the overall analysis, methodology and original pieces of work in the Department of Health discussion document. Respondents were not asked to indicate their position on a tobacco advertising ban. A total of 275 representations have been received which make reference to the discussion document. Of these 232 include statements in favour of a ban and 13 include statements against a ban. A copy of the list of names of organisations and individuals who have made representations has been placed in the Library.

Contracting-out

Mr. Wells: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of cumulative savings to the national health service from the contracting-out of support services; and what plans she has to extend contracting-out.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley *[pursuant to the reply, 16 February 1993, column 160]:* The national health service has since its early days been a substantial purchaser of supplies from commercial contractors. Building construction, building maintenance, computer and

medical equipment maintenance, for example, have been bought in from external sources and subjected to market testing procedures. Since 1983, the market testing of NHS support services has been extended by the introduction of the management requirement for regular market testing of domestic cleaning, catering and linen and laundry services. More than 20 other support services have also been market tested, resulting in a saving in 1990-91 in excess of £125 million in NHS overhead costs. Market testing in the NHS is being further extended to all areas of support services as set out in the November 1991 White Paper "Competing for Quality".

My right hon. Friend, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is today placing in the Library guidance on the implications for market testing of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. In some cases where work is awarded to an outside contractor following market testing that may constitute the transfer of an undertaking in the terms of the regulations. If so, the regulations provide that the new employer takes over responsibility for the employment contracts of the employees, who would transfer on their previous terms and condition of service. The guidance sets out circumstances in which the regulations are, and are not, likely to apply, and explains their effect where they do.

This guidance will be equally relevant to the NHS market testing programme and I hope that national health service managers and contractors will find the guidance helpful.

The NHS will press ahead with its challenging programme of market testing in the expectation that this will lead to both improvements in quality of service and financial savings, thereby releasing resources for direct patient care.

SCOTLAND

Legal Aid

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the legal aid budget is taken up by civil legal aid.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Civil legal aid payments represented 20·8 per cent. of the total amounts paid to solicitors and counsel by the Scottish Legal Aid Board in 1991-92.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of legal aid applications have been granted in each district court, sheriff court, and the high court in Scotland for each of the past five years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the proportion of successful legal aid applications for summary criminal proceedings in the sheriff and district courts and for civil proceedings in the sheriff court is set out in the table. Criminal legal aid in solemn procedures is granted directly by the courts and that information is not held centrally.

Proportion of legal aid applications granted:

percentages

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Sheriff Court					
(Civil Proceedings)	57·2	69·8	69·8	77·7	70·4
(Summary Criminal Proceedings)	86·6	92·6	90·8	94·6	93·1
District Court					
(Summary Criminal Proceedings)	86·9	92·7	84·2	88·3	87·5

Tayside Health Services

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment has been made of the number of job losses in each hospital following the implementation of current Tayside health board acute services review.

Mr. Stewart: Following Tayside health board's acute services review the number of job losses at each hospital in each area has been assessed as follows:

(a) Perth and Kinross

About 20 whole time equivalent posts will be lost when services transfer from Bridge of Earn hospital to the new Perth royal infirmary in June 1993. These changes are independent of the board's acute services review.

(b) Angus

The exact number of job losses will not be known until the public consultation period is complete and decisions reached.

The maximum reductions in whole-time equivalent staff are expected to be:

	Number
Forfar Infirmary	18·7
Stracathro Hospital	9·2
Arbroath Infirmary	12·6
Total	40.5

(c) Dundee

The impact on jobs is dependent on the extent of development required at Ninewells hospital to replace Dundee royal infirmary. Until decisions are reached on the board's review it is not possible to begin detailed work on assessing the implications for that hospital. As a result, the board is not yet able to assess future staff numbers in Dundee.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state the capital allocations made to Tayside health board in each of the past four years and the amount of additional allocation made this year; and what is their relationship to Scottish health services revenue equalisation parity.

Mr. Stewart: The capital allocation to Tayside health board in each of the last four years was:

	£ million
1989-90	11·144
1990-91	11·856
1991-92	16·607
1992-93	18·928

In 1992-93 a supplementary allocation was made to health boards and, of this, Tayside was allocated £600,000.

Unlike revenue allocations to health boards capital allocations are not distributed on a "SHARE" formula basis. Health boards and NHS trusts submit their proposals for capital projects to the Scottish Office Home and Health Department. These are reviewed and

allocations are made, primarily on the basis of local and national strategic objectives and priorities. The total capital programme for the NHS in Scotland in 1992-93 was £229·588 million.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the current numbers of ambulances and ambulance staff serving the Angus area; and what increases are planned to meet the changes in hospital services proposed by Tayside health board.

Mr. Stewart: There are currently 17 ambulances and 35 ambulance staff serving the Angus area.

Until the board has made a decision on the future of acute services in the area it is not possible to determine what changes might be required to the ambulance service.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consultations he has had or plans to have with Tayside health board regarding provision of ambulance services in consequence of proposed changes in Angus hospital services.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Health and Home Affairs met the chairman and general manager of Tayside health board on 29 January. During the meeting, the board outlined the remaining work programme for its review of acute services, inlcuding its plans to hold discussions with the Scottish ambulance service. These were to establish the implications for the ambulance service in Angus of the board's options for acute services in that area.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the services closed and reduced at *(a)* Stracathro and *(b)* Arbroath infirmary over the past 10 years, stating the reduction in manpower and buildings.

Mr. Stewart: The following changes have been introduced at Stracathro hospital and Arbroath infirmary during the last 10 years.

Stracathro Hospital

In 1987 in-patient gynaecology services were withdrawn and replaced by a day-case only service. The resources were reallocated to another speciality and there was no effect on staff or buildings.

During 1990 surgical paediatric bed numbers were reduced by eight; orthopaedic surgery decreased by four to 96; and general surgery from 41 to 37. The changes had no effect on staff or buildings.

In 1991, Grampian health board ceased referring patients to the orthopaedic service at Stracathro. This resulted in a reduction of 49 available orthopaedic beds at the hospital. This service change resulted in the following staff reductions:

	Reduction per cent.
Physiotherapy	0·5
Catering	3·0
Cleaning	2·6
Nursing	[1]36·7

[1]Whole-time equivalents

Arbroath Infirmary

In August 1989, gynaecology day surgery services were withdrawn, but this had no effect on staff numbers.

In 1990 the number of maternity beds were reduced from 18 to 9, reflecting actual usage. There was no effect on staff numbers.

Between 1985 and 1987 specialist gynaecology, general surgery and medical paediatrics services transferred to Dundee or Stracathro hospital and a day ward was created for minor surgery. The surgical bed complement was also reduced from 34 to 13 day beds.

Some staff transferred to Stracathro along with general surgical beds, while others were redeployed at Little Cairnie, or lost through natural wastage.

All the above changes were carried out by redeployment of staff.

Local Enterprise Councils

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the budget for each local enterprise company in Scotland for 1992-93.

Mr. Stewart: The allocation of resources to the local enterprise companies is an operational matter for Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. I have asked the chairmen of these bodies to write to my hon. Friend.

Edinburgh University Dental School

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what representations he has received regarding the future of the University of Edinburgh dental school; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what arrangements have been made for specialist care and continuing education following the closure of the University of Edinburgh dental school; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: Discussions between the University of Edinburgh and Lothian health board and the Scottish Office Home and Health Department about the proposed new Edinburgh dental hospital continue. My right hon. Friend remains fully committed to providing such capital investment as is necessary to establish the dental hospital. It will be for the Edinburgh royal infirmary NHS trust, if its application for trust status is approved, to take forward plans for a new dental hospital and for continuing dental education and to negotiate contracts for the provision of specialised dental services with prospective purchasing health boards.

Market Testing

Mr Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make a statement on the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to the market testing of public services in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has today placed in the Library guidance on the implications for market testing of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. I also refer my hon. Friend to the separate statements which my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health are making on specific issues raised by the application of the regulations to their areas of responsibility.

I hope that the guidance and statements will be helpful to all those involved in market testing, including compulsory competitive tendering, to the extent that they set out circumstances in which the regulations are, and are

not, likely to apply, and explain their effect where they do. My Departments and the NHS in Scotland are pressing ahead with their extensive programmes of market testing. I am confident that innovative proposals will be produced, offering good value for money, whether or not the regulations apply.

Local authorities, of course, must conduct compulsory competitive tendering according to the relevant legislation. If in the light of all the circumstances of any individual case, it appears to me that a local authority has behaved so as to unlawfully restrict, distort or prevent competition, I will consider taking statutory action.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions since 1991 compensation has been paid in respect of not planting conifers in sites of special scientific interest; and what has been the sum paid out in each year.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 February 1993]:* The information supplied by Scottish Natural Heritage is as follows:

Year[1]	*Agreements involving lump sum payments*		*Agreements involving annual payments*		*Interest paid*[2]	*Total*
	No.	*Amount* £	*No.*	*Amount* £	£	£
1991-92	15	1,085,773	2	18,060	450,159	1,553,992
[3]1992-93	5	674,014	3	8,800	158,298	841,112

[1] Financial year, April to March inclusive.
[2] Interest on the agreed compensation is payable over the period during which the arbitration agreement is concluded.
[3] Year to date. The final outturn is not expected to be substantially different.

Prison Escapes

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inmates have escaped from Scottish prisons each year since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The information is as follows:

Year	*Number of inmates escaped*
1979	38
1980	41
1981	61
1982	45
1983	39
1984	27
1985	46
1986	18
1987	40
1988-89	96
1989-90	67
1990-91	42
1991-92	35
[1]1992-93	41

[1] to 28 February.
Note: Figures from 1979-87 are for calendar years. The 1988-89 figure represents a transitional period of 15 months.

Prison Statistics

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the prisons in Scotland, giving the number of inmates and prison officers at each for each year since 1979.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: *[holding answer 2 March 1993]:* The information requested is included in reports "Prisons in Scotland" and for 1991-92 "Scottish Prison Service" presented to Parliament annually by my right hon. Friend. Details are as follows:

Year	*Command No.*	*Average Daily Number of Prisoners or Inmates*	*Staff (Full-Time and Part-Time)*
1979	8037	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 20
1980	8421	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 14
1981	8618	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 17
1982	8980	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 17
1983	9400	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 7
1984	9670	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 7
1985	1	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 7
1986	223	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 7
1987	551	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 7
1988-89	998	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 9
1989-90	1499	Page No. 13	Page No. 23
1990-91	1633	Page No. 20	Page No. 24
1991-92	2143	Appendix No. 1	Appendix No. 8

Potatoes

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to obtain comparative information about EC member state intervention into the potato market; and if he will give figures showing assisted purchases of potatoes in 1992 for the United Kingdom, France and Spain.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* Information about EC member state intervention in the potato market is not formally obtained by my Department.

We are aware that certain other member states—for example, France, Italy, Spain and Portugal—may operate ad hoc intervention and other support measures in times of over-supply. In addition, the Netherlands operates a seed support scheme. Specific figures of assisted purchases by France and Spain are not however available.

The amount of the United Kingdom Government contribution towards the Potato Marketing Board's joint support buying scheme during 1992-93 has not yet been determined, but a contribution will be made in accordance with the terms of the Government's financial agreement with the board.

Winter Deaths

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of excess winter deaths in Scotland in each year since 1987.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* The information available is given in the table.

Number of deaths by quarter, Scotland, 1987-92

Year (Quarters)		Number of deaths
1987	1	16,881
	2	14,925
	3	14,096
	4	16,112
1988	1	16,533
	2	15,300
	3	14,252
	4	15,872
1989	1	16,427
	2	15,165
	3	14,134
	4	19,291
1990	1	16,933
	2	15,105
	3	13,737
	4	15,752
1991	1	16,278
	2	14,891
	3	13,814
	4	16,058
1992	1	16,510
	2	14,673
	3	14,030
	4	15,732

The 1992 figures are still provisional.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what plans he has to amend the advice offered by his Department on 1 December 1992 to Ayrshire and Arran health board in connection with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981;

(2) what advice he has given to health boards on the effect of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 in relation to the transfer of services to opt-out trusts.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 5 March 1993]:* Advice was given on 1 December by the central legal office for the national health service in Scotland, which is a division of the Common Services Agency. That advice was given to Ayrshire and Arran health board and was intended to offer general guidance in relation to the regulations.

The National Health Service Act (Scotland) 1978, as amended, makes express provision in relation to the transfer of health board staff to NHS trust on existing terms and conditions of their employment.

Forestry

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the amount spent in each of the last 10 years on supporting British forestry in both cash and real terms; what is his estimate of future costs; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The bulk of public funding for forestry is channelled through the Forestry Commission. Figures showing the Commission's total net expenditure for the past 10 years, and estimates for the next four years, are given in the table. These include the net cost of managing the commission's forests, the net cost of forestry research, and grants paid to private forest owners. They do not take account of the Government's support for forestry through tax relief, which will no longer be available after the end of the current tax year, nor the income from disposals of Forestry Commission land.

Year ended 31 March	Cash £ million	Real £ (1992-93) million
1983	55·7	97·5
1984	56·8	94·7
1985	54·0	85·1
1986	51·4	77·3
1987	51·2	74·5
1988	48·1	66·3
1989	53·4	68·7
1990	58·2	70·4
1991	74·4	82·9
1992	76·5	79·8
1993	[1]98	—
1994	[1]94	—
1995	[1]96	—
1996	[1]96	—

[1] Estimates.

Hazardous Waste

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has held with other member states of the European Community concerning the draft directive on the incineration of hazardous waste; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* None. In accordance with normal practice it is my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment who has the lead in discussions and negotiations with other member states in connection with this directive.

Qualifications and Skills

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet representatives of the Engineering Employers Federation, the Confederation of British Industry, or the Manufacturing and Construction Industries Alliance to discuss ways in which his policies can more effectively encourage individuals in Scotland to improve their qualifications and skills.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* My right hon. Friend will continue to hold frequent meetings with industry representatives to discuss policies relating to skills and qualifications, and the way individuals might make best use of them.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement giving the details of those policies which have been introduced by his Department in each of the last five years in order positively to encourage individuals in Scotland to improve their skills and qualifications.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* The Government have taken a number of significant steps in the last five years to encourage individuals to improve their skills and qualifications.

These steps include: introduction of youth training and youth credits; introduction of employment training which merges, with employment action, into training for work from 1 April 1993; continued rapid development of the system of Scottish vocational qualifications and other measures to secure parity of esteem with academic

qualifications; and introduction of Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and their networks of local enterprise companies.

Further details for each year can be found in the relevant departmental reports and from the period from April 1991 from the annual reports of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been *(a)* the tonnage of landings for first sale and importing and *(b)* the levy collected by the Sea Fish Industry Authority on these landings in respect of (i) white fish, (ii) pelagic fish, (iii) shellfish and (iv) roe and other fish products at Peterhead in each of the last five years.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 9 March 1993]*: The information on landings by fishing vessels and imports into Peterhead is set out in the following tables:

	Tonnes				
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Landings					
Whitefish	87,012	75,858	69,481	71,592	64,828
Pelagic	29,922	24,329	33,092	46,853	45,043
Shellfish	196	607	633	762	860
Livers/Roes	42	53	36	48	51
Imports					
Whitefish	314	704	103	121	267
Pelagic	—	—	—	3,119	2,709
Shellfish	—	—	—	—	153
Livers/Roes	—	—	—	—	—

The question of the levy collected by the Sea Fish Industry Authority on these landings and imports is a matter for the chief executive of the authority and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Legal Aid and Advice

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his current estimate of the proportion of the adult population of Scotland which after 1 April will be eligible for *(a)* legal advice and assistance and *(b)* legal aid, for civil purposes on a nil contribution; what is his current estimate of the proportion of the adult population of Scotland which after 1 April will be eligible for (i) legal advice and assistance and (ii) legal aid for civil purposes irrespective of the level of contribution; what is the current proportion of the adult population of Scotland currently eligible for (1) legal advice and assistance and (2) legal aid for civil purposes on a nil contribution; and what current proportion of the adult population of Scotland is eligible for (y) legal advice and assistance and (z) legal aid, for civil purposes irrespective of the level of contribution.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 March 1993]*: Given the variations over time in individuals' circumstances it is not possible to estimate with any precision the proportion of the adult population eligible for legal aid.

Further analyses of data from the family expenditure survey have been undertaken since my reply of 20 January, *Official Report*, column *228*, to the hon. and learned Member. These suggest that in Scotland the percentage of households which would be eligible for civil legal aid under the new proposed changes to eligibility criteria, as announced in my reply of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *226*, to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson), would be in the range of 50 to 60 per cent., with between 15 to 25 per cent. free of contributions. A similar number would be eligible for advice and assistance, with between 25 to 30 per cent. free of contributions. This represents no substantive change in the total numbers eligible, but a drop of between 5 and 10 per cent. of households currently eligible for free civil legal aid or advice and assistance.

Community Care

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements and decisions remain to be finalised in connection with the transfer of community care responsibilities to social work departments.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1993]*: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will shortly make statutory directions on consultations on plans and on choice of residential accommodation. He will issue the following regulations relating to the funding arrangements for people in residential care and nursing homes:

1. The National Assistance (Sums for Personal Requirements) Regulations 1993.
2. The Residential Accommodation (Relevant Premises, Ordinary Residence and Exceptions) Regulations 1993.
3. The Charging Order (Residential Accommodation) (Scotland) Order 1993.

My right hon. Friend will also issue guidance on these regulations and on sections 21 to 24 of the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudications Act 1983 and the successor arrangements to the independent living fund.

Training

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of young people eligible for the Government's youth training guarantee in each local enterprise company area; and what is the number of young people receiving youth training.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1993]*: Information about the number of young people eligible for the youth training guarantee in each local enterprise company area is unavailable. Local enterprise companies estimate demand in their areas for the purpose of planning provision and keep in touch with demand through liaison with the careers service, so that supply can be adjusted to ensure that the guarantee is met. The number of young people receiving youth training in Scotland as at December 1992 was 34,332.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish information on the meeting of the youth training guarantee by local enterprise company area.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1993]*: Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise have assured Ministers that within their respective networks each local enterprise company is meeting the youth training guarantee; and will continue to meet it. More detailed information about supply and demand in relation to youth training is being refined, in consultation with Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and

the careers service. It is my intention that appropriate information should be published once that process is complete.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people qualify for employment training; and how many are receiving employment training in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* Given that the unemployed are eligible for a wide range of assistance from Government-funded sources, within which employment training is one option, it would not be meaningful to seek to identify the number of people in Scotland who qualify for employment training. As at December 1992 there were 14,813 people receiving employment training in Scotland.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research his Department has conducted into the quality and range of youth training and employment training schemes in Scotland; and if he will publish the results.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* The Scottish Office does not conduct such research at its own hand. The long-running evaluation studies of the effectiveness of youth training and employment training organised by the Department of Employment continue to cover Scotland. In addition it has been, since 1991, the responsibility of Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to keep under continuous review the suitability and adequacy of training provided under these schemes.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the comparative expenditure per youth training and employment training place in each year since the commencement of these schemes.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* Expenditure in Scotland per youth training and employment training participant is as follows:

	1991-92 (actual)	*1992-93 (estimated outturn)*
	£	*£*
Youth Training	2,671	2,791
Employment Training	5,902	6,291

Note: No separate Scottish data exist prior to 1991-92.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what citizens charter provisions apply to the rights of youth training, employment training and employment action participants.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise have drawn up statements of charter standards which they aim to apply to all their dealings with members of the public; and local enterprise companies have either adopted statements of charter standards or are considering doing so. In addition, the Government have stated clearly their commitment to fulfilling the youth training and employment training guarantees and to ensuring that those groups at which the training for work scheme is aimed receive an appropriate standard of treatment.

Staphylococcus Aureus

Mr. Andrew Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many reported staphylococcus aureus cases have occurred in each health board area in the past five years; and what advice his Department gives as to how cases should be dealt with.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* The number of cases of multiple-resistant staphylococcus aureus confirmed by microbiological testing and reported to the communicable diseases (Scotland) unit in each of the last five years was as follows:

Health Board	*Number of cases reported*				
	1988	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Argyll and Clyde	2	4	8	33	43
Ayrshire and Arran	3	6	7	18	29
Borders	—	—	4	1	3
Dumfries and Galloway	—	1	1	1	1
Fife	—	—	—	—	—
Forth Valley	—	—	—	—	15
Grampian	—	—	1	12	6
Greater Glasgow	89	45	49	163	185
Highland	—	1	—	—	4
Lanarkshire	11	22	28	35	83
Lothian	10	13	8	15	22
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside	7	19	26	62	73
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—
Totals	122	111	132	340	464

The hospital infection manual, which has been made available for use in both the national health service and the private sector in Scotland, includes detailed guidance on procedures for dealing with any outbreak of this infection in hospitals. I have arranged for copies of the manual to be placed in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 12 March 1993

DEFENCE

Bosnia

Mr. Day: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what further consideration he has given to the deployment of forces in the Bosnia region; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I informed the House on 14 January at column 1057 that in order to enhance the safety of our troops in Bosnia I was authorising the deployment of additional forces to the region. These included HMS Ark Royal and her carrier group, with a light gun battery and associated support units embarked. I made clear that these deployments did not mark any change in our policy in the area. The carrier group reached the Adriatic on 26 January.

We have kept this deployment under continuous review. We judge it still to be essential that the carrier group remains on station in the Adriatic to carry out the role for which it was orginally deployed, and that the associated personnel remain in a high state of readiness. In the light of current circumstances, we are satisfied that this readiness can now be achieved by moving most of the Army personnel concerned, who have been embarked on ships in the Adriatic, to the United Kingdom where they will be able to resume normal training. They will be available to rejoin their equipment by air at very short notice if this becomes necessary.

Vulcan Bomber

Mr. Olner: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what reason training flights for the remaining Vulcan bomber have been continued; and when has been the cost of continuing training from September 1992 to the present.

Mr. Aitken: The Vulcan is flown occasionally to maintain aircrew currency for a delivery flight to its eventual purchaser. The additional cost of operating and maintaining the aircraft between 20 September 1992—the date of its last display—and 26 February 1993—its most recent continuation flight—was approximately £3,600.

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the exact role *(a)* Brown and Root, *(b)* Hunting plc and *(c)* Atomic Energy Authority Technology would play in the day-to-day management of the AWEs.

Mr. Aitken: Brown and Root, Hunting plc and AEA Technology have formed Hunting BRAE Ltd. as a joint venture company, which has been selected as the winner of the competition to appoint a contractor to operate the Atomic Weapons Establishment from 1 April 1993. It is Hunting BRAE Ltd., rather than its parent organisation, which will have the responsibility and authority for day-to-day management of the establishment after that date, subject of course to MOD's stringent operating requirements.

Departmental Properties

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many MOD properties were *(a)* offered for sale and *(b)* sold under their discount scheme in 1992, 1991 and 1990.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table:

Year	*Offered for sale*	*Sold*
1992	321	385
1991	460	525
1990	721	715

Some of the properties sold were dwellings which were offered for sale in the previous year.

Service Personnel (Housing)

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what discussions he has had with local authority associations concerning the housing needs of personnel leaving the services;

(2) what discussions he has had with local authorities in areas covering MOD sites concerning the housing needs of personnel leaving the services.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Officials from my Department are in regular contact with local authorities. The Department of the Environment circular 54/75 gives local authorities advice about the housing requirements of ex-service personnel. My officials have been considering with Environment Department officials the revision and re-issue of that guidance. The Department of the Environment will be consulting local authority associations on the draft text of a replacement circular shortly.

Inhumane Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what are the defence implications of the delay in ratification of the 1981 inhumane weapons convention by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what are the defence implications of the delay in ratification of the 1977 additional protocols to the Geneva convention by Her Majesty's Government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no defence implications. Our armed forces already adhere to the principles laid down in both the additional protocols to the Geneva conventions and the United Nations weaponry convention.

Secondary Medical Care

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 February to the hon. Member for Woodspring (Dr. Fox), *Official Report*, column *740*, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of building a new joint RAF-NHS hospital in East Anglia.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: There are no plans to build a new joint hospital.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 26 February to the hon. Member for Woodspring, (Dr. Fox) *Official Report*, column *740*, what estimate his Department has made of the cost of modernising and expanding the Princess Alexandra hospital, Wroughton.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: The information requested is commercial-in-confidence.

Princess Mary Hospital, Halton

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate his Department has made of the costs of closing the Princess Mary hospital, Halton.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: This will depend on the future use of the hospital site.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions his Department has had with *(a)* Oxford regional health authority, *(b)* Buckinghamshire Purchasing Agency, *(c)* Aylesbury Vale community health council, *(d)* Buckinghamshire family health services authority and *(e)* Stoke Mandeville hospital concerning his decision to close the Princess Mary hospital, Halton.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: Exploratory meetings have taken place between Royal Air Force staff and representatives of the Oxford regional health authority, the Buckinghamshire Purchasing Agency, and the Stoke Mandeville hospital to discuss our proposals for the reorganisation of RAF secondary medical care. We will be seeking the views of all local health bodies affected by our plans.

Stoke Mandeville Hospital

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the proposals for the establishment of an MOD-funded wing at Stoke Mandeville hospital.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: A number of potential sites for the proposed joint MOD/NHS venture to cover our requirements in East Anglia are being considered. A final decision on location has not yet been made.

Civil Servants (Redundancies)

Mr. Viggers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many central London-based administrative level civil servants in his Department of administration trainee level and above have been made redundant or warned for redundancy in the past 18 months; and if he will classify these by rank.

Mr. Aitken: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Aitken: Detailed information in the form requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. The services contracted out since November 1991 have, however, included some cases where a substantive in-house bid was not tested against external competition, but not necessarily because an in-house bid was "excluded". The reasons for these include the requirement being for a short-term contract making in-house provision impracticable, and the in-house operation being invited to bid but declining to do so.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Market Testing

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in the Land Registry since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of Her Majesty's Land Registry is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. John McAllion, dated 11 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Land Registry it is my responsibility to answer questions on operational matters. The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has therefore asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question to him concerning HM Registry's market testing programme.

Since November 1991, market testing projects relating to the following services have been initiated:—

- Building Management/Maintenance and Estate Services
- Legal Services
- Catering
- Security Guarding
- Land Registry Surveys
- Land Registry Property Inspections
- Printing and Graphic Design
- Records Management

These projects are at varying stages of development but none that involve existing in-house provision have reached the point at which a contract has been awarded. The Registry will continue to participate in the service-wide initiative to market test appropriate services. The market testing programme is one component of the Registry's commitment to improve the quality of the service it provides and ensure that its customers receive best value for money.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the House Library.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many staff in the Land Registry are assigned to the market-testing programme; how much the programme has cost the Land Registry since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of Her Majesty's Land Registry is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. John McAllion, dated 11 March 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Land Registry it is my responsibility to answer questions on operational matters. The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has therefore asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question to him concerning resources used in HM Land Registry's market testing programme.

The Registry has appointed a Project Board to oversee its market testing programme. Staff involved with the programme report, via Project Managers, to the Project Board. The equivalent of approximately 6 full time staff are engaged on this work. From November 1991 to date, the total staff and non-staff costs associated with the programme is estimated to be £250,000.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will be placed in the House Library.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many staff in the Lord Chancellor's Department are assigned to the market-testing programme; how much the programme has cost his Department since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are 12 staff assigned to the market testing programme in the Lord Chancellor's Department. The programme has cost £375,000 since November 1991. These figures include those engaged on the review of enforcement agents and their cost, as well as the costs of those consultants engaged to assist with managing the programme.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in the Lord Chancellor's Department since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; and what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Since November 1991 the Lord Chancellor's Department has put out to tender the professional services required to manage its accommodation and development of new court buildings. Prior to that date these services were provided by PSA Services.

Lists of the commissions which have been let are as follows:

Court Building

Scheme	*Service*	*Company*
Bournemouth	Design	Stride Treglown-Gleeds
Bournemouth	Quantity Surveying	Kyle Stewart
Docklands	Feasibility and Design	Knight Frank and Rutley
Docklands	Estate Surveying	C. F. Baker and Partners
Docklands	Quantity Surveying	W. S. Atkins
Cardiff	Project Management	PSA Projects
Crawley	Feasibility and Design	Kyle Stewart
Staines	Feasibility and Design	PSA BM South East
Staines	Estate Surveying	W. S. Atkins
Neath	Project Management	W. S. Atkins
Pontypridd	Project Management	CS Project Management
Leicester	Project Management	TT Project Management
Newport Isle of Wight	Project Management	Widnell Project Management
Bournemouth	Project Management	

Estate management

Group/circuit	*Managing agent*
Chelmsford group	Drivers Jonas
Kingston group	Drivers Jonas
Western circuit "A"	PSA Bournemouth
Western circuit "B"	Torpy
M&O circuit	E. C. Harris
North East circuit	Bernard Thorpe
HQ building	PSA (BM) SE
London group	McBains
Northern circuit	Grimley J. R. Eve
Maidstone group	McBains
RCJ	Turner and Townsend
Wales and Chester	Torpy

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the firms of consultants used by the Land Registry as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John. M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of Her Majesty's Land Registry is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. John McAllion, dated 11 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Land Registry it is my responsibility to answer questions on operational matters. The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has therefore asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question to him concerning the use of consultants as part of HM Land Registry's market testing programme.

The Land Registry has used the following consultants to assist in carrying through its market testing programme:—

Building Management/Maintenance and Estate Services—Acer Consultants Limited

Catering—Touche Ross

The estimated total cost in the current financial year is £152,000. The Registry employs external consultants for market testing purposes when there is a need to supplement the expertise and experience of its own staff. That policy will continue to be applied to future market testing programmes.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the House Library.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will list the firms of consultants used by the Lord Chancellor's Department as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The firms of consultants used by the Lord Chancellor's Department as part of the market-testing programme since November 1991 are:

PE International
AMTEC Consulting
DM Management Consultants Ltd.
Kyte and Co.
Coopers and Lybrand
Price Waterhouse
MBA Consultants

The total cost as at 1 March 1993 is £152,000.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from the Land Registry since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of her Majesty's Land Registry is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from John Manthorpe to Mr. John McAllion, dated 11 March 1993.

As Chief Executive of the Land Registry it is my responsibility to answer questions on operational matters. The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has therefore asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question to him concerning services contracted out from HM Land Registry.

Since November 1991 no further services or functions have been contracted out from the Land Registry. In-house bids are being invited in respect of each of the internal services currently included in the Land Registry's market testing programme.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the House Library.

Contract Law

Mr. Boateng: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Norwood (Mr. Fraser) of 10 February, *Official Report*, column *623*, if he will list the representations he has received on the Law Commission's proposals to abolish the principle of privity of contract distinguishing between those in favour of those opposed to the proposals.

Mr. John M. Taylor: No, it would not be practicable to do so. The Lord Chancellor has received a large number of representations from commercial landlords and tenants on the Law Commission's proposals. Although in general the former oppose and the latter support them, there is no uniformity of view within each group; for example, there are differing opinions among landlords as to whether the proposals should extend to future leases and among tenants as to whether they should extend to existing leases.

Legal Aid

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of the total legal aid budget is accounted for by the cost of compulsory attendance and cover to police stations by solicitors 365 days per year.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The total cost of the duty solicitor police station scheme in 1991-92, which provides for an initial telephone service as well as attendance at police stations, was £53·6 million. This accounted for 5·9 per cent. of the total net expenditure on legal aid. Information on the detailed breakdown of the overall figure is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

ENVIRONMENT

Rural Housing

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many units were provided by housing associations in rural areas for each year since 1979; and what proportion this represented of the total provision for housing associations for that year.

Sir George Young: Figures are readily available only for schemes supported by the Housing Corporation since 1989-90. Information for earlier years cannot be provided except at disproportionate cost. The numbers of approvals granted by the Housing Corporation since 1989-90 in settlements with populations of 3,000 or fewer and the proportion of total approvals these represent are as follows:

	Approvals in settlements of 3,000 or fewer	*Proportion of total approvals Per cent.*
1989-90	578	2·7
1990-91	348	2·8
1991-92	2,345	5·5
1992-93	1,788	3·7

The 1992-93 figures are to 28 February 1993, and exclude approvals given under the housing market package.

Council Tax

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce a 50 per cent. reduction in council tax for single householders in place of the current reduction.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. The existing 25 per cent. discount for single adult households is reasonable.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. David Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to improve the performance of the Docklands light railway.

Mr. Redwood: The chairman of the Docklands light railway yesterday announced the signing of a contract with Brown and Root Projects Ltd. to deliver improved performance and equipment reliability for the railway. The contractor will take responsibility for completing and commissioning the new extension to Beckton, for introducing new rolling stock and an advanced new signalling and control centre. The contract is based on specified levels of performance and system reliability which will provide direct benefits to the quality of service offered to the DLR's customers.

Local Government, Derbyshire

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Local Government Commission to publish draft recommendations for local government structure in Derbyshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The draft recommendations were due on 21 March. However, the commission has asked for more time to consider the many representations made to it, particularly on community identity. I have today issued a direction which extends this stage of the process until 16 May 1993.

This extension will not effect the time allowed for public consultation on the draft recommendations. There will however be a corresponding reduction in the time allowed for the commission to prepare the final report, so it is still due on 19 September.

Light Pollution

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies his Department has carried out or commissioned in relation to minimising light pollution; what information his Department has on the use in Spain of lighting designed to restrict light shining skywards; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: I have been asked to reply.

My Department is participating in the work of the Commission Internationale de l'Eclairage (CIE) to provide international guidelines to minimise light pollution from road lighting. The CIE is also considering light pollution from other sources of external light. We have no information on specific lighting schemes in Spain.

Practices are being developed to curb light pollution as far as possible. Guidance will be published this year on the environmental aspects of good lighting practice; this will be followed by the Department on its trunk roads, and I hope other highway authorities will do the same. Designs to minimise light pollution will be used whenever lighting is being planned for trunk roads in rural areas. Research has been commissioned into lighting at rural roundabouts to minimise light pollution.

EDUCATION

Voluntary-aided Schools

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications have been received for the building of new voluntary-aided schools in the last 15 years.

Mr. Forth: Full information in the form requested is not readily available. However, the Department's records show that since November 1988 the Secretary of State has considered proposals under section 13 of the Education Act 1980 to establish 33 new voluntary aided schools of which six would have required the provision of new school buildings.

Grant-maintained Status

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much money has so far been spent by his Department on the promotion of grant-maintained status, including advertisements for the GM Helpline; how much has been budgeted for future expenditure in this same area; and if he will make a statement on the application of the rules on the use of advertising to promote Government policies.

Mr. Forth: Information about expenditure on disseminating information about grant-maintained status is circa:

	£
Publications	
(from 1 April 1991)	282,000
Conferences	
Accommodation	57,000
Specialised support	52,000
Helpline	
Advertising	200,000
Operation	25,000

Publication costs prior to 1991 and mailing costs, which form only part of a contract, cannot be dissagregated without incurring disproportionate costs.

For the future 10 further conferences are planned at a total cost of circa £136,000. The Helpline is a pilot scheme only. Expenditure on publications in 1993-94 has been planned on the basis of current demand. In issuing information about self-governing status, officials are subject to the guidelines sent to the Society for Education Officers on 3 March 1993 as a proposed code of conduct for local authorities.

Further Education Staff

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the effect of clause 10 in the proposed new contract for further education staff on the applicability of the Wages Act 1986; and what are the reasons for the inclusion of this clause in the contract.

Mr. Boswell: This is the responsibility of the college employers' forum which drew up the model contract to which the hon. Member refers.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kashmir

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the British Government are taking to ensure the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Neither India nor Pakistan fully implemented the UN resolutions of 1948 and 1949, which Britain supported and they have, to some extent, been overtaken by events. We believe the Kashmir dispute can ultimately be solved only by peaceful agreement between India and Pakistan as provided for under the 1972 Simla agreement.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) of 7 December, *Official Report*, column *461*, what action the British Government have taken to encourage Pakistan and India to agree a

means of settling their dispute over Kashmir as provided for in the Simla agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have taken every opportunity in our discussions with the Indian and Pakistan Governments to encourage them to agree a means of settling their dispute over Kashmir as provided for under the 1972 Simla agreement.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Open Government

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what are the principles and criteria which will be used to determine to what areas and matters openness will apply in relation to his open government initiative.

Mr. Waldegrave: The aim of this initiative is to ensure that we reach the right balance between greater openness and the need to preserve confidentiality and privacy where this is justified.

The Government will be publishing a White Paper later this Session with further proposals on these issues.

Release of Documents

Dr. Wright: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *303*, which specified retained documents mentioned in the representations to him by historians following his invitation of June 1992 are *(a)* now released, *(b)* to be released and *(c)* to remain closed.

Mr. Waldegrave: The following documents, mentioned in representations to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster following his invitation to historians in June 1992,

(a) have now been released:—
Papers relating to:
Shingle Street
German Occupation of the Channel Islands
Derek Bentley
John Christie and Timothy Evans
Suez (in addition to those released in 1987)
WM (40) 171, 172 (previously withheld extracts from Cabinet Minutes)
JIC papers and minutes 1939-41
CAB134—Future Policy Committee papers for 1959-61
CAB121—Cabinet Office papers on the Dieppe Raid
PR(56)3—Cabinet Committee paper—Policy Review
D(52)26—Cabinet Committee paper—Defence Policy and Global Strategy
JIC(45)55—Resistance in Norway
JIC(45)76(0)—Resistance in Norway
FO371/72215—Foreign Office file relating to the murder of an American in Greece in 1948
JPS/COS—papers and minutes of the Joint Planning Staff and Chief of Staff (38 out of 51 documents requested)
W071/1240—file relating to the court martial and execution of Josef Jakobs
F0800/256—previously withheld extracts relating to Austen Chamberlain
PES—advice from the Advisory Board for the Research Councils 1990-91

(b) Will remain closed:—
Court martial records containing sensitive personal information
Domestic files of security and intelligence agencies
1 Joint Planning Staff paper 1948
5 extracts from Chief of Staff minutes 1949-50

All other documents mentioned are under review for possible release.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Secure Units

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to his oral statement of 2 March, *Official Report*, column 139, what consideration he has given to location of the secure units; and what factors will be taken into account;

(2) pursuant to his oral statement of 2 March, *Official Report*, column 139, how much he is setting aside in each of the next five years for the running costs of secure units.

Mr. Jack: As my right hon. and learned Friend indicated in his statement on 2 March, cols. 139-42, we are now working up detailed plans for the introduction of a new secure training order for persistent juvenile offenders between the ages of 12 and 15. At this stage, when the necessary discussions have not been concluded, it is not possible to provide the details sought by the hon. Member.

Prison Education

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria have been used in deciding to whom to award tenders for prison education.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Contracts have been and will be offered to those providers which offer the best combination of quality and price.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a condition of a successful bid for contracts for market-tested jobs in his Department that they comply with existing conditions which guarantee equal opportunities for women.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: All bidders will be required to comply with statutory obligations relating to equal opportunities for women.

Animal Experiments

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to investigate Wickham Research Laboratories in respect of the requirements of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office inspectorate is investigating the allegations made by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection against Wickham Research Laboratories in respect of the requirements of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps his Department takes to ensure that non-animal alternative tests are available before he grants any licence for test on live animals for particular purposes.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Home Office inspectorate, in considering applications for project licences under the

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, requires applicants to show that they have considered whether the purpose of the research programme could be achieved by methods not involving living animals.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list each prosecution under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 since 1990, the organisation involved and the level of fine.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since 1990 there has been one prosecution under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. In 1991 Chilham Rabbits Ltd. was prosecuted for supplying rabbits for use in scientific procedures, although not designated under section 7 of the Act as a breeding and supplying establishment. The company was fined £75 with £42 costs.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for an independent review of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 is kept under review by the independent statutory Animal Procedures Committee.

Hostels

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the reasons for the shortfall in income underlying the increase in class IX, vote 1, sub-head B1, "probation and bail hostels", in the spring supplementary estimates.

Mr. Jack: Approved probation and bail hostels derive income from payments by, and on behalf of, residents.

The shortfall in income arises because industrial action by the National Association of Probation Officers from March 1992 until January 1993 reduced the numbers of residents in hostels for much of 1992-93.

Police Baton

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 2 March, *Official Report*, column *76*, what information he has concerning trials outside the metropolitan area of an expandable baton and variants of a straight baton for use by the police service.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I will write to my hon. Friend.

Child Sex Abuse

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to allow the prosecution of British citizens who have committed child sexual abuse in Thailand.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 11 March 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) on 18 February at column *296*.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Mates: The services or functions contracted out from Northern Ireland Departments since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition were:

Department of Health and Social Services

The Child Support Agency contracted out keyholding, catering and cleaning services in August 1992, October 1992 and August 1993 respectively in preparation for the launch of the agency. There was no in-house bid as these are new services and were contracted out in line with the White Paper "Competing for Quality: Buying Better Services".

Department of Economic Development

The facilities management of the Training and Employment Agency's computer systems for Transit, Training Centre Administration and MIS interface was contracted out in September/October 1992. The computer installation was damaged in the explosion at the Forensic Science Laboratories at Belfast and the tight timescale in restoring a full transit service from a contingency site precluded the necessary effort in mounting an in-house bid. Investment appraisal indicated that contractors would be able to find economies of scale which would not be matched in-house. There would also have been substantial additional costs attached to an in-house bid as the computer site had been seriously damaged in the explosion and would have required extensive and expensive refurbishing.

In the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland I would not wish to disclose the names of successful contractors.

National Insurance Inspectors

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many national insurance inspectors are employed in Northern Ireland; and of these how many are trained for this task.

Mr. Hanley: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Alec Wylie to Mr. Eddie McGrady, dated 12 March 1993.

As I am responsible for Social Security operational matters your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of National National Inspectors has been passed to me for reply.

There are at present 52 National Insurance Inspectors in Northern Ireland. With the exception of a recently appointed Inspector who is currently undergoing training, all other Inspectors have been given the appropriate training.

I hope this is helpful.

WALES

Local Government Finance

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what are the amounts of revenue support grant to local authorities in Wales for each year from 1990-91 to 1992-93;

(2) what were the total amounts of rate support grant to local authorities in Wales for each of its last three years of operation.

Mr. David Hunt: The information available is shown in table 7.5 of "Welsh Local Government Financial Statistics 1992", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what were the figures for non-domestic rate payments to local authorities in Wales for each of the last five years;

(2) what were the total amounts of central Government grants to local authorities in Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information available is shown in table 1.3 of "Welsh Local Government Financial Statistics 1992", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the total amounts of central Government capital provision to local authorities in Wales for each of the last five years.

Mr. David Hunt: The information requested is given in the following table.

Local authority capital provision[1]

	£ million
1988-89	416·1
1989-90	450·1
1990-91	474·9
1991-92	527·9
1992-93	630·7

[1] The figures shown from 1988-89 and 1989-90 are PES provision. For 1990-91 to 1992-93 they are Assumed Gross Expenditure (AGE) and are not strictly comparable to earlier years. This is the sum of central government's New Planning Total and that expenditure which local authorities are assumed to finance from their own resources.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Welsh local authority income was represented by central Government support, including the transfer of non-domestic rates in 1990 and the switch from local taxation to VAT in 1991, for each financial year since 1979-80; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information available is as follows.

Outturn summary
Financing of rate/general fund revenue expenditure[1]

£ million

		Source of financing			Source of financing as percentage of expenditure		
Financial year	*Revenue expenditure*[2]	*Government grants*[3]	*Non-domestic rates*[4]	*Domestic rates/ community charges*[5]	*Government grants*[3]	*Non-domestic rates*[4]	*Domestic rates/ community charges*[5]
1981-82	1,244	885	232	148	71	19	12
1982-83	1,339	948	240	174	71	18	13
1983-84	1,418	1,006	243	149	71	17	11
1984-85	1,481	1,047	255	166	71	17	11
1985-86	1,543	1,084	276	185	70	18	12
1986-87	1,665	1,149	308	214	69	19	13
1987-88	1,797	1,241	338	237	69	19	13
1988-89	1,956	1,305	369	281	67	19	14
1989-90	2,122	1,385	407	317	65	19	15
1990-91	2,228	1,400	443	396	63	20	18
[6]1991-92	2,509	1,810	525	156	72	21	6
[6]1992-93	2,684	1,891	536	240	70	20	9

[1] This table provides a general indication of the trend in the financing of revenue expenditure. Comparisons between the rates (prior to 1990-91) and community charge (1990-91 onwards) systems must be made with caution since expenditure definitions and categories differ. For example specific and supplementary grants within Aggregate Exchequer Grant (included under Government grants prior to 1990-91) are not comparable in coverage to those within Aggregate External Finance (included 1990-91 onwards). Also the split between domestic and non-domestic rates (and rebates relating to each) prior to 1990-91 has been estimated.

The percentages do not add to 100 per cent. for technical reasons: these include rounding and authorities' use of balances.

[2] Local authority revenue expenditure is defined here (i) prior to 1990-91 as "relevant" expenditure plus expenditure on certain non-relevant items such as net expenditure on mandatory student awards (ii) for 1990-91 onwards as revenue expenditure "on a Total Standard Spending basis".

[3] Prior to 1990-91 comprises Rate Suport Grant, specific and supplementary grants within Aggregate Exchequer Grant, domestic rate relief grant and rate rebate grants. For 1990-91 onwards comprises Revenue Support Grant, specific and supplementary grants within Aggregate External Finance, Community Charge Benefit Grant, Transitional Relief/Community Charge Reduction Scheme grants and Community Charge Grant (1991-92).

[4] Prior to 1990-91 estimated non-domestic rate income, net of rebates. For 1990-91 onwards the Distributable Amount.

[5] Prior to 1990-91 estimated domestic rate income, net of domestic rate relief grant and rate rebates. For 1990-91 onwards net of Community Charge Benefit Grant, Transitional Relief/Community Charge Reduction Scheme grants and Community Charge Grant (1991-92) but including community council precepts.

[6] Provisional.

Local Government Employees

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total number of full-time equivalent local authority employees in Wales, in each financial year since 1979-80, stating separately how many of the total were teachers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The information available is shown in the following table.

Local authority staffing[1]

	Total all services Thousands[2]	*Lecturers and teachers*[3] *Thousands*[2]
1980	127·9	34·7
1981	125·1	34·0
1982	122·7	33·2

	Total all services Thousands[2]	Lecturers and teachers[3] Thousands[2]
1983	123·9	33·3
1984	123·4	33·3
1985	121·8	32·6
1986	120·9	32·3
1987	120·4	32·0
1988	121·4	32·2
1989	121·9	32·2
1990	122·9	32·2
1991	124·0	32·3
1992	124·8	32·3

[1] Full time equivalents at March of each year.
[2] Provisional.
[3] Information on lecturers and teachers cannot be separated.

Clwydian Hospital Trust

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual salary of the chairman of the Clwydian hospital trust.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The chairman of the Clwydian hospital trust receives remuneration at the rate of £19,285 per annum.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from his Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

The Attorney-General: There have been no services or functions contracted out in the circumstances described in the Departments for which I am responsible.

SCOTLAND

Drugs-related Deaths

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will establish a public inquiry into drug-related deaths in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 10 March 1993]*: I understand that the procurator fiscal at Glasgow is currently conducting a detailed series of inquiries into a number of apparently drug-related deaths of young adults in the Glasgow area. The possibility of holding an inquiry under the Fatal Accidents and Sudden Deaths Inquiry (Scotland) Act 1970 is presently being considered by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate.

Forestry Commission

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list each block of Forestry Commission land that has been sold since 1979, together with its size and location; and what has been the total revenue from these sales.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 10 March 1993]*: Lists giving details including size and location of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992 are held in the Library of the House. Records of individual areas sold before July 1981 are not available. The lists are restricted to forest land because information on the sale of other categories of land, such as agricultural land, houses, gardens and minor boundary adjustments, is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

A total of £171·2 million was realised from sales of all types of Forestry Commission land and property between 1 April 1979 and 31 March 1992.

EMPLOYMENT

Wig Makers

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has for improving the quality of training for wig makers in England.

Mr. McLoughlin: The quality of training is primarily the responsibility of employers. However, the Department does assist industry-led quality initiatives through industry training organisations and industry-led bodies. Consideration is being given by industry-led bodies with an interest in wig-making to the development of Scottish and national vocational qualifications.

Women Returners

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will make a statement on *(a)* Government incentives and programmes relating to women returners for the last five years, including funding and *(b)* EC initiatives for women returners which have been implemented or have received funding from the EC in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Department supported the "Back to the Future" initiative which provided information and practical assistance to women returners in 1990. Training and enterprise councils deliver a variety of provision to meet the needs of women returners. Employment training and its successor programme, training for work, include a special eligibility route, part-time participation and support with the cost of childcare. Women returners have always been able to make use of job clubs and employment service programme development funds are available to meet the needs of specific groups.

The European social fund supports many projects providing vocational training for women returners and the Community initiative, "New Opportunities for Women", provides for transnational exchange of training opportunities for women.

Our "New Horizons for Women" initiative promotes a whole range of opportunities for women, whatever their circumstances and our new out-of-school child care grant will benefit women who wish to return to work after their children start school.

Training Centres

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether the skill centres at Swindon, Deptford, Cardiff, Slough, Manchester regional office, Edinburgh regional office, Enfield annex, St. Helens, Cumbria, East Lancashire, Edinburgh. Lambeth, Leicester, Liverpool, Slough and Wakefield are still functioning as training centres.

Mr. McLoughlin: The training centres at Cardiff, Deptford, Enfield (Annex), St. Helens, East Lancashire, Edinburgh, Lambeth, Liverpool and Wakefield are still functioning as training centres. The training centres at Slough and Swindon are also still functioning but not at their original locations.

The training centre at Leicester is now no longer functioning. The training centre at Cumbria was sold to Training for Industry and Commerce Company Ltd, who are believed to be no longer trading.

Manchester regional office and Edinburgh regional office were Skills Tranining Agency regional offices (RO) and not training centres.

Trade Unions

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members can act on behalf of full-time trade union officers as well as members of trade unions; and whether officers are included in the scope of the commission.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members may grant assistance to anyone contemplating or taking proceedings against a union, its officials or trustees, for failure to give effect to the statutory rights of members, or for breach of union rules on certain matters. Provided they can bring the relevant proceedings, full-time trade union officers may apply to the Commissioner for such assistance.

Information Technology

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women, and what percentage of the total, are employed in the information technology industry, excluding word processor operators; how many women, and what percentage of the total, are employed in information technology posts within Government Departments and operations; and which industry employs the highest number of women in information technology-related posts.

Mr. McLoughlin: The information available from the "Labour Force Survey Summer 1992" (June-August) is as follows.

Women Employees and Self-employed in Main occupations most directly related to Information Technology Great Britain (Thousands—not seasonally adjusted)

Occupation[2] [3]	*All industry sectors*		*Public Administration (SIC 91)*[4]	
	Number	*Percentage of total*	*Number*	*Percentage of total*
Computer systems and data processing managers	14	13	[1]—	—
Computer analyst/programmers	36	19	[1]—	—
Computer operators, data processing operators etc.	115	66	12	58
Total	174	29	16	34

[1] Under 10,000 and therefore not shown.
[2] It is not possible to separately identify and exclude word processor operators.
[3] Other people who do some work with computers eg "filing, computer and other records clerks" have not been included.
[4] SIC 91 includes public administration, national defence, police, fire services and justice.
Note: Comparable information for each industry could only be provided at disproportionate cost, but is available via the Quantime LFS Service in the House of Commons Library.

Unemployment, Southampton

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the travel-to-work areas with lower levels of unemployment than those including Southampton, Itchen in *(a)* development areas *(b)* intermediate areas, *(c)* covered wholly or partly by enterprise zones, *(d)* urban programme partnership authorities or *(e)* urban programme authorities.

Mr. McLoughlin: Travel-to-work areas which are in development areas or intermediate areas or covered wholly or partly by enterprise zones, urban programme partnership authorities or urban programme areas are listed. The claimant unemployment information requested for these areas can be obtained from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Travel to work areas in the United Kingdom in development areas, intermediate areas, or covered wholly or partly by enterprise zones or urban programme authorities.

Travel to work area	*Development area*	*Intermediate area*	*Enterprise zone*	*Urban programme area*
Medway and Maidstone	—	—	EZ	—
London	—	—	—	UPA
Bodmin and Liskeard	—	IA	—	—
Bristol	—	—	—	UPA

Travel to work area	Development area	Intermediate area	Enterprise zone	Urban programme area
Bude	—	IA	—	—
Cinderford and Ross-on-Wye	—	IA	—	—
Falmouth	DA	—	—	—
Helston	DA	—	—	—
Newquay	DA	—	—	—
Penzance and St. Ives	DA	—	—	—
Plymouth	—	IA	—	UPA
Redruth and Camborne	DA	—	—	—
Birmingham	—	IA	—	UPA
Coventry and Hinckley	—	IA	—	UPA
Dudley and Sandwell	—	IA	EZ	UPA
Kidderminster	—	IA	—	—
Telford and Bridgnorth	—	IA	EZ	UPA
Walsall	—	IA	—	UPA
Wolverhampton	—	IA	—	UPA
Corby	DA	—	—	—
Derby	—	—	—	UPA
Gainsborough	—	IA	—	—
Leicester	—	—	—	UPA
Nottingham	—	—	—	UPA
Wellingborough and Rushden	—	—	EZ	—
Barnsley	—	IA	—	UPA
Bradford	—	IA	—	UPA
Doncaster	—	IA	—	UPA
Grimsby	—	IA	—	—
Huddersfield	—	—	—	UPA
Hull	—	IA	—	UPA
Keighley	—	—	—	UPA
Leeds	—	—	—	UPA
Rotherham and Mexborough	DA	—	EZ	UPA
Scunthorpe	DA	—	—	—
Sheffield	—	IA	—	UPA
Wakefield and Dewsbury	—	—	EZ	UPA
Whitby	DA	—	—	—
Accrington and Rossendale	—	IA	EZ	—
Blackburn	—	IA	—	UPA
Bolton and Bury	—	IA	—	UPA
Burnley	—	—	EZ	UPA
Liverpool	DA	—	—	UPA
Manchester	—	IA	—	UPA
Oldham	—	IA	—	UPA
Pendle	—	—	EZ	—
Preston	—	—	—	UPA
Rochdale	—	IA	—	UPA
Widnes and Runcorn	DA	—	—	UPA
Wigan and St. Helens	DA	—	—	UPA
Wirral and Chester	DA	—	—	UPA
Workington	DA	—	EZ	—
Bishop Auckland	DA	—	—	—
Darlington	—	IA	—	—
Durham		IA		
Hartlepool	DA			UPA
Middlesbrough	DA		EZ	UPA
Morpeth and Ashington		IA		
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	DA			UPA
South Tyneside	DA			UPA
Stockton-on-Tees	DA			UPA
Sunderland	DA		EZ	UPA
Aberdare	DA			
Bangor and Caernarfon		IA		
Blaenau Gwent and Abergavenny	DA			
Bridgend		IA		
Cardiff		IA		
Cardigan	DA			
Fishguard		IA		
Haverfordwest		IA	EZ	
Holyhead	DA			
Lampeter and Aberaeron	DA			
Llanelli		IA		
Methyr and Rhymney	DA			
Neath and Port Talbot	DA			
Newport		IA		
Pontypool and Cwmbran		IA		
Pontypridd and Rhondda	DA			
Porthmadoc and Ffestiniog		IA		
Pwllheli		IA		

Travel to work area	Development area	Intermediate area	Enterprise zone	Urban programme area
Shotton Flint and Rhyl	DA		EZ	
South Pembrokeshire	DA		EZ	
Swansea		IA	EZ	
Wrexham	DA			
Alloa		IA		
Arbroath	DA			
Ayr		IA		
Badenoch		IA		
Bathgate	DA			
Cambeltown		IA		
Cumnock and Sanquhar	DA			
Dumbarton	DA			
Dundee	DA		EZ	
Dunfermline		IA		
Dunoon and Bute		IA		
Falkirk		IA		
Forres		IA		
Girvan		IA		
Glasgow	DA			
Greenock	DA		EZ	
Invergordon and Dingwall		IA	EZ	
Irvine	DA			
Kilmarnock	DA			
Kirkcaldy		IA		
Lanarkshire	DA		EZ	
Lochaber		IA		
Newton Stewart		IA		
Skye and Wester Ross		IA		
Stewartry		IA		
Stranraer		IA		
Sutherland		IA		
Western Isles		IA		
Wick		IA		
Londonderry			EZ	

Labour Statistics

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what percentage of the long-term unemployed is made up of persons aged over 40 years; and what has been the percentage increase in this proportion over the last three years.

Mr. McLoughlin: In January 1993, 13 per cent. of people who were claimant unemployed for over a year were aged over 40, compared with 17 per cent. in January 1990. This represents a decrease of 4 percentage points.

Restart

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each region and for Great Britain as a whole, how many unemployed people were referred to Restart courses by employment service counsellors *(a)* between April 1991 and March 1992 and *(b)* from April 1992 to the latest available date, showing for each period how many of them were unemployed for over two years, how many attended and completed the course, what were the outcomes of the participants and how many had benefit penalties imposed for not attending or failing to complete their attendance at the Restart course; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Ms Clare Short, dated 12 March 1993.

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to her about Restart Courses. These are matters which fall within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

As you will know from our previous correspondence, Restart Courses are short courses aimed at helping people who are having the most difficulty returning to work. They are not an alternative to regular job search or other employment or training programmes. Essentially they provide people with the opportunity to explore all the options open to them and give them confidence to take the next step back to work.

Since 1990, people who have been unemployed for 2 years or more who refuse or fail to take up a place on an Employment Department employment or training programme at their Restart interview, are asked to attend a Restart Course.

As your question has raised a number of specific points, I am setting out the information you have asked for in the four tables attached. Tables 1 and 2 deal with all Restart Course attenders, and tables 3 and 4 refer to those covered by the requirement to attend. As explained in previous replies, we collect at a Regional level the number of people who are referred to the course who are also unemployed for 2 years or more. We have not, however, felt it necessary to keep similar figures for all those referred. The Benefits Agency (BA) make the decision on whether an individual's benefit should be reduced for failure to attend or complete the course. Their figures are compiled by BA Districts which have different boundaries to our own Regions. To avoid confusion, I have given the national figure only.

I hope that this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Gas Tanks

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will introduce regulations to require physical barriers to be placed between sites where high-pressure gas tanks are stored and residential areas.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have no such plans.

Older Workers

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what evidence she has on the relative levels of difficulty being experienced by persons aged over 55 years in the securing of employment.

Mr. McLoughlin: Unemployment rates are lower for those aged 56 and over than for younger people, and they have been falling over recent years, so older people who wish to work are more successful than others in securing employment.

Many employers recognise the qualities, experience and reliability of older people. We have recently set up an advisory group on older workers which I chair, to seek out examples of good practice and persuade other employers that it is worth their while to follow suit. The advisory group met for the first time in February, and I am pleased with the progress made.

Worker Protection

Mr. Clapham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans she has to provide protection for workers against practices which fall below acceptable standards.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* There is already in existence a comprehensive statutory framework of employment protection rights. That will be further enhanced by provisions in the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Bill, which is currently before Parliament.

In general, however, terms and conditions of employment are a matter for agreement between employers and employees according to their own priorities, needs and circumstances, without Government intervention.

Official Entertainment

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was spent on official entertainment in her Department in 1991-92 and 1992-93 to date.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* For 1991-92 I refer the hon. Member to the oral reply I gave him on 16 February 1993, *Official Report* column 121.

The equivalent figures for 1992-93, to the latest available date of the end of January were £14,215, £8,028, £16,078, £18,450 and £6,410 respectively.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the amount of overpayment made by her Department to TECs in each year for which information is available; how much has been recovered; and how many TECs are still holding money which has been overpaid.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 10 March 1993]:* The information currently available shows overpayments amounting to £3,366,550 and £8,820,016 were made to training and enterprise councils (TECs) in England in 1990-91 and 1991-92 respectively.

Of these overpayments, a total of £6,704,068 has been recovered to date. Forty-four TECs still hold overpayment moneys.

Information about overpayments to TECs in Wales is held by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to the answer of 30 October 1992, *Official Report*, column *911*, if she will give a regional breakdown of the figures given in the answer.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 11 March 1993]:* This information could be provided from the "Labour Force Survey" only at a disproportionate cost. The data may be obtained via the Quantime LFS service available in the Library.

Skills Training Agency

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to her answers of 4 March, *Official Report*, columns *272-73*, on skill centre closures, and 19 November 1992, *Official Report*, columns *337-38*, on Skills Training Agency properties, what action was taken in respect of the Coventry skill centre when the Skills Training Agency was sold.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 11 March 1993]:* When the Skills Training Agency was sold, the business of the Coventry skillcentre was sold to Astra Training Services Ltd. The property was held on a 21-year lease which expires on 30 June 1993. The lease was assigned to Astra Training Services Ltd. for the remainder of its term.

Staff (Working Hours)

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if she will undertake a survey of all offices and agencies for which she has responsibility to ascertain to what extent staff supplying a service to the public are curtailing their work on a Friday afternoon earlier than other days of the week; and if she will make a statement on her policy on hours of staff working each week.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* The Department's policy is to ensure that all arrangements relating to the hours of work of staff maintain the overall efficiency of the Department and its services to the public. Recent customer satisfaction surveys in the employment service show high levels of overall satisfaction with the services provided by their offices, the opening hours of which are tailored by management to meet the needs of the local community. We are, nonetheless, happy to arrange for a sample survey to be undertaken.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give the number of persons without accommodation who were income support recipients in England at May 1991 and at the latest available date *(a)* by local benefit agency office, *(b)* by DSS region and *(c)* for England as a whole by age and whether or not they were unemployed at the time.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Pensions

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what discussions his Department has had with the Post Office about the contents of the three new forms for new pensioners currently under trial;

(2) when the current trial of new forms for new pensioners will be completed; and if he will make the results public;

(3) if he will make it his policy for all new pensioners to continue to be equally informed about all the methods of pension payment available to them;

(4) how long before the date on which someone becomes eligible for a state pension he or she is sent the form which asks which method of payment is preferred;

(5) how many people have been sent each type of form in the current trial of new forms for new pensioners.

Miss Widdecombe: Our policy is to encourage the use of automated credit transfer which is more secure, reliable and cost effective than order books. Nevertheless the Department will continue to make available to all new pensioners information about all methods of pension payment. Forms are sent to future pensioners approximately four months before the expected date of eligibility.

The three forms being trialled at present are being sent to 8,000 people each. The last of these forms will be sent out on 16 March. The contents of the forms are not a matter for the Post Office, but Post Office Counters Ltd. was made aware of the trial.

The results of the trial will inform our decision on what kind of form to use in future; and that form will of course be published.

Pensioners

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 12 February, *Official Report*, column *840*, if he will give a breakdown by age of the pensioners with an income of less than £5,000 per year.

Miss Widdecombe: Estimates for 1988—the year in respect of which information was given in my reply of 12 February, *Official Report*, column *840*—are given in the table.

Percentage of all pensioner units with gross income under £5,000 per annum

Age	*Per cent.*
60-64	7
65-69	25
70-74	17
75-79	29
80+	22

Notes:

(a) A pensioner unit is a single person aged over state pensionable age (SPA) or a couple where the head of the unit is over SPA, regardless of whether they are drawing state pension.

(b) The age of a pensioner couple is taken to be the age of the head of unit.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Cathedrals

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what grants his Department has made towards the preservation of cathedrals.

Mr. Brooke: I refer to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Reading, West (Sir A. Durant) on 25 January at col. *557*.

Durham Cathedral

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to visit Durham city in 1993 for the 9th centenary of Durham cathedral.

Mr. Brooke: I have no present plans to visit Durham this year, but I should be delighted to do so if an appropriate opportunity were to arise.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC Fish Imports

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the autonomous tariff quotas, with the duties applied, for the importing of fish into the EC for each category of fish, for each of the last five years.

Mr. Gummer: The EC autonomous tariff quotas for fishery products for the past five years were published in EC regulations 785/88, 542/89, 4043/89, 3921/90, 3902/91. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalophathy

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to revise the guidance given to farmers and vets when handling cattle with suspected BSE in relation to the hazard of Creutzfeldt Jakob disease.

Mr. Soames: None. Existing advice, issued by this Ministry and the Health and Safety Executive and agreed with the Department of Health, on the safe handling of suspect cases of BSE remains valid.

HEALTH

NHS Employees

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were employed full-time and part-time in the NHS in Cambridgeshire in each year since 1984.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information available centrally is shown in the table. From 1990, figures are not held centrally for sub-regional levels.

Hospital and community health services (HCHS) staff working in the national health service within Cambridgeshire

All HCHS Staff	Full Time	Part Time	Total
1984	7,210	2,200	9,410
1985	7,270	2,190	9,460
1986	7,200	2,270	9,460
1987	7,180	2,290	9,470
1988	7,370	2,350	9,720
1989	7,440	2,440	9,880
1990	7,520	2,630	10,140

Note:

1. All figures are rounded to the nearest 10 whole-time equivalents.
2. Some totals may not add due to rounding.
3. Figures exclude agency nurse staff.
4. Does not include family health service professionals ie general practioners and general dental practitioners.
5. Does not include regional health authority Headquarters staff.
6. Does not include that part of West Norfolk and Wishbech DHA that is within Cambridgeshire.

HIV Positive Children

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many babies were born to mothers who were HIV positive in the last 10 years; how many of these became HIV positive; and what are the projected figures for the next 10 years;

(2) how many children at each age from birth to 18 years have *(a)* become HIV positive or *(b)* died from AIDS in the last 10 years; and what are the projected figures for the next 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: For HIV reports and AIDS cases, children are defined as those under the age of 15 at diagnosis.

By 31 October 1992, 448 children had been born to women known to be HIV infected in the United Kingdom. Of these, 151 have been confirmed as infected with HIV and 133 are not infected. The infection status of the remaining 164 has yet to be determined. The rate of transmission cannot be calculated from these figures because it is likely that not all HIV infected childbearing women will have been identified.

Also by 31 October 1992, there had been an overall total of 422 reports of confirmed HIV infection in children of whom 108 had been diagnosed with AIDS. Fifty-six children with HIV infections were known to have died.

The most recently published projections for AIDS and HIV infection in England and Wales did not give projections for children.

Salmonellosis

Mrs. Currie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of cases of *(a)* salmonellosis in all forms and *(b)* salmonellosis caused by salmonella enteriditis phage type 4 for the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: The table shows totals of laboratory reports of all salmonellas and S.enteritidis PT4 made to the public health laboratory service (PHLS).

Salmonella in humans
England and Wales
Annual totals 1988-1992

Year	All Salmonellas	S. Enteritidis PT4
1988	27,478	12,522
1989	29,998	12,931
1990	30,112	16,151
1991	27,693	14,693
[1]1992	31,352	16,981

Source: PHLS/SVS Update on Salmonella Infection.

[1] 1992 data are not directly comparable with previous years because of the introduction from 1 January 1992 of a new PHLS reporting system for human salmonellosis.

Free Prescriptions

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people qualified for free prescriptions on the grounds of low income during the year 1991-92; and, of these, how many were in receipt of *(a)* invalidity benefit, *(b)* industrial injuries disablement benefit, *(c)* severe disablement allowance, *(d)* statutory sick pay, *(e)* sickness benefit, *(f)* invalid care allowance and *(g)* unemployment benefit.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1991-92 about 4 million people were estimated to be entitled to free prescriptions on the ground of low income. The information requested on those included in this figure who were in receipt of the benefits listed is in the table.

Estimated number of people in England in receipt of (a) invalidity benefit, (b) industrial injuries disablement benefit, (c) severe disablement allowance, (d) statutory sick pay, (e) sickness benefit, (f) invalid care allowance and (g) unemployment benefit, and their partners, entitled to free prescriptions on grounds of low income in 1991-92

1991-92 ('000s)

Benefit[1]	Number of recipients and their partners, entitled to free prescriptions[2]
(a) Invalidity benefit	126
(b) Industrial injuries disablement benefit	7
(c) Severe disablement allowance	132
(d) Statutory sick pay	8
(e) Sickness benefit	24
(f) Invalid care allowance	33
(g) Unemployment benefit	112

[1] These benefits are not mutually exclusive and people receiving more than one are included in the figures for each benefit they receive.

[2] May include partners over pension age who are exempt from prescription charges on age grounds.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest estimate of the number of people eligible for free prescriptions; and how many of these exemptions are *(a)* income related and *(b)* status related.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1992 over 24 million people were estimated to be eligible for free prescriptions, of which about 20 million were exempt from charges on grounds of status and some 4 million were entitled to remission of charges on grounds of low income. Estimates of the number of people exempt from charges on medical grounds are not available.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from her Department since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Sackville: Since the publication of "Competing For Quality," the Department of Health has contracted out a number of building services—all in its new headquarters building at 80 London road—without entering an in-house bid against the external competition. These are listed with the names of the successful contractors:

—Facilities management: Procord
—Mechanical and electrical: Haden Maintenance Ltd
—Maintenance of lifts: Kone Lifts
—Cleaning: Pall Mall Cleaning Services
—Security: Reliance Security Group
—Waste disposal: Bywater (Leyton) Ltd
—Pest control: Rentokil Environmental Services Ltd.

In the case of Facilities Management, no in-house bid was made as there were insufficient in-house technical skills and expertise to manage a new, high technology building. No in-house bids were made in the other areas because these services were not previously provided by civil servants.

Youth Treatment Centres

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the number of places in, the occupancy rate in, the cost of and the location of youth treatment centres under her control over the last five years; and whether she has any plans to add to the provision.

Mr. Yeo: The youth treatment service consists of two residential centres—St. Charles in Brentwood, Essex and Glenthorne in Erdington, Birmingham, which have 30 and 40 places respectively. Information on the number of places in the centres occupied, the occupancy rate and the cost of the service over the last five years is shown in the table:

Year	*Average Occupancy Numbers*	*Per cent. Occupancy*	*Gross Cost £ Thousands*
1988-89	63	90	Not Available
1989-90	61	86	5,559
1990-91	61	87	6,467
1991-92	59	84	7,223
1992-93	53	76	[1]7,867

[1] Estimated.
Note: Costs include depreciation rather than gross capital expenditure.

There are no plans to expand the service at present.

Secure Units

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what offer she made to the local authorities on Tyneside for support for the capital costs of the provision of additional local authority secure unit provision; what total level of support for capital costs would be made available from Government sources; and what offer of assistance has been made in respect of revenue costs.

Mr. Yeo: No such offer has been made to local authorities on Tyneside. The Government have identified the need for an additional 12 secure places to be provided within the north-east region, and will meet the full capital costs. Revenue costs will be considered in the appropriate public expenditure survey.

Psychotherapists

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many psychotherapists are provided on the national health service per head of the population.

Mr. Yeo: This information is not collected centrally.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps her Department has taken to ensure that there is an easily accessible pool of professional interpreters for approved social workers and doctors, in accordance with 2.35 of the code of practice of the Mental Health Act 1983;

(2) how many local authorities and health authorities have drafted guidance on the use of interpreters in accordance with paragraph 2.35 of the code of practice to the Mental Health Act 1983.

Mr. Yeo: The code offers guidance on good practice. It is for health and local authorities to decide on their joint needs and provide accordingly in the light of particular local circumstances. Information on the number of authorities which have drafted guidance on the use of interpreters is not available centrally.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the Government have taken to set and monitor targets for recruitment and promotion of mental health staff from black and ethnic minority communities.

Mr. Yeo: Arrangements to monitor progressively all groups of national health service staff recruited from black and ethnic minorities were introduced earlier this year.

Women Smokers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has as to the percentage of women who are *(a)* employed, *(b)* on income support and *(c)* unemployed who smoke.

Dr. Mawhinney: Information relating to the percentage of women aged 16 to 59 in Great Britain who smoke cigarettes is available from the "1990 General Household Survey" by economic status as follows:

All working – 31 per cent.
Unemployed – 54 per cent.

Available analyses do not separately identify those on income support who smoke.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for lowering the smoking rate among low-income females; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The White Paper "The Health of the Nation" sets a target of 20 per cent. for women smoking by the year 2000. In view of their higher smoking rates, it is clearly essential to reach women on low incomes if this is to be achieved.

This will be done through the comprehensive programme set out in the White Paper, including health education, action on price, advice from general practitioners and other health professionals and proper controls on advertising and promotion.

NHS Procurement

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the name and description of all statutory instruments laid before the House on matters relating to NHS procurement in the last 12 months and which are the subject of annual or other renewal.

Mr. Sackville: I am not aware that any statutory instruments of this description have been laid before the House during the last 12 months.

Women's Mental Health

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps her Department is taking to address women's specific mental health needs and to minimise their drug dependency by ensuring that they are offered alternatives to drug treatment.

Mr. Yeo: Women's mental health needs, including alternatives to drug treatment, are addressed in the "Health of the Nation Key Area Handbook on Mental Illness" published in January and "First Steps for the National Health Service", which was published in November 1992, copies of which are available in the Library.

Tobacco Advertising

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average time taken by the Committee on Monitoring the Agreement on Tobacco Advertising and Sponsorship to respond to complaints to it about apparent breaches of the voluntary agreement on tobacco advertising; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the application of restrictions on generic advertisements for smoking of advertising campaigns containing visual clues to, but no reference to, the name of the brand being advertised; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Complaints about the content of advertisements in relation to the cigarette advertising code of practice, part of the British code of advertising practice, are a matter for the Advertising Standards Authority.

Joint Nutrition Task force

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the four working groups of the joint nutrition task force.

Mr. Sackville: The nutrition task force at its first meeting set up working groups in four important areas. Details of the initial membership are shown in the tables. The members of each working group will be expected to consult widely within their areas of expertise and invite others who have particular interest or knowledge in the specific subjects under discussion to contribute as appropriate.

CATERING WORKING GROUP:

Chair

Michael Audis—Gardner Merchant Ltd.

Members

Caroline Hurren—Health Education Authority
Chris Bone—Hotel Catering and Institutional Management Association
David Clark—British Hospitality Association
Peter Jones—Bournemouth University
Gill Cawdron—School Meals Assessment Programme
Karen Sorenson—British Dietetics Association
Diane McCrae—Consumers' Association
David Philips—Burger King
Ann Simpson—Dietitian, Private Sector
Marcia Fry—Department of Health
Dr. David Buss—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Alan Clarke—Department of Education

Secretariat

Bob Wenlock—Department of Health
Roger Taplin—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

NHS SERVICES AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS WORKING GROUP

Chair

Dr. Alan Maryon Davis—Consultant in Public Health Medicine, South East Thames Regional Health Authority

Members

Paula Hunt—Health Education Authority
Carole Middleton—Chairman, British Dietetic Association
Dr. E. Jacobs—Patients Association
Representative of Royal College of General Practitioners—yet to be appointed
Dr. Aileen Robertson—Postgraduate GP Training
Dr. Suraiya Ismail—London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Dr. K. Carnegie-Smith—Director of Public Health, Scarborough
Professor Alan Jackson—Department of Human Nutrition, Southampton University
Ros Meek—Royal College of Nursing
Keith McLean—Regional General Manager, Yorkshire RHA
John Langan—Trust Chief Executive, Kingston Hospital NHS Trust
Marcia Fry—Department of Health
Dr. V. Press—Department of Health
Dr. Alastair Cameron—Department of Health
Ray Churnside—Department of Health
Shirla Philogene—Department of Health
David Hewlett—Department of Health
Gavin Thoms—Department of Health

Secretariat

Robert Wenlock—Department of Health

FOOD CHAIN WORKING GROUP:

Chair

Dr. Michael Baxendine—Food and Drink Federation

Members

Dr. David Conning—Director General, British Nutrition Foundation
Simon Wallace—Health Education Authority
Professor Philip James—Director, Rowett Institute
Maggie Sanderson—National Food Alliance
Ursula Arens—British Dietetic Association
Ann Foster—Scottish Consumer Council
Dr. David Richardson—Food and Drink Federation
Alister Robertson—British Retail Consortium
Ben Boot—National Farmers Union
John Stevens—Dairy Trades Federation
Dr. Anthony Kempster—Meat and Livestock Commission
David Roberts—National Federation of Bakers
Dr. Martin Wiseman—Department of Health

Charles Cockbill—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Ken Dale—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Secretariat
Dr. Sue Martin—Department of Health
Roger Taplin—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION (PUBLIC, SCHOOLS AND MEDIA) WORKING GROUP:
Chair
Peter Bazalgette—Television Programme Producer
Members
Catherine Stillman-Lowe—Health Education Authority
Gill Fine—British Nutrition Foundation
Miriam Polunin—Guild of Food Writers
Imogen Sharp—National Forum for the Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease
Julia Pentelow—Community Dietitian, Kettering Health Authority
Joanna Scott—Food and Drink Federation
Wendy Godfrey—British Retail Consortium
Geoffrey Cannon—Chairman, National Food Alliance
Dr. Martin Wiseman—Department of Health
Richard Harding—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Jill Cramphorn—Department for Education
Secretariat
Dr. Sue Martin—Department of Health
Roger Taplin—Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

Nursing Homes

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to ensure that all elderly residents in nursing homes are registered with a local general practitioner.

Mr. Yeo: Regulations under the Registered Homes Act 1984 require the person in charge of a nursing home to make adequate arrangements for residents, where necessary, to receive general medical and dental services.

Prescriptions

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many items available on a prescription only basis now cost less than the cost of the prescription itself; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) on 10 March at column *609*.

Health Authority Personnel

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many candidates for appointment to chairmanship or non-executive directorships of health authorities or trusts were not appointed as a result of their refusal to accept emoluments.

Dr. Mawhinney: None, so far as is known centrally.

Helicopters

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will reply to the letter from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford concerning the landing of the London helicopter emergency medical service on the playground of Monson primary school on 20 January.

Mr. Sackville: I wrote to the hon. Member on 26 February explaining that this matter was being thoroughly investigated and that I would write again once inquiries were complete. Officials are meeting the appropriate authorities on Monday 15 March. I will reply fully once the outcome of that meeting is known.

Community Care

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the present funding for care in the community.

Mr. Yeo: We have fully honoured our commitment to fund community care fairly. We have made available £565 million by way of a ring-fenced special transitional grant for English local authorities in 1993-94. This amount includes an additional 35 per cent. over and above the transfer of funds from social security for authorities' new community care responsibilities, and a further substantial sum for responsibilities for severely disabled people. Total resources for personal social services including community care for 1993-94 will be £5,585 million. This represents a 15 per cent. increase on 1992-93, and a real terms increase of more than 33 per cent. over the three year-period from 1990-91.

Maternity Services

Mrs. Wise: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has for publication of data from the maternity hospital episode system.

Mr. Sackville: Some data relating to key items connected with delivery episodes were published for the year 1989-90 in the evidence given to the House of Commons Health Committee, Session 1991-92. The 1990-91 data are still being examined for quality and completeness, but it is expected that at least the same number of data items will be published as for 1989-90. Until this analysis is complete, it will not be possible to give a firm date for publication.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all those services or functions that have been contracted out from the Inland Revenue since November 1991 without market testing an in-house bid against external competition, with, in each instance, the successful contractor and the reasons for the decision to exclude an in-house bid.

Mr. Dorrell: Where services have been contracted out since November 1991 by the Inland Revenue, there has been in each case an in-house bid or a full comparison with the cost of providing the service in-house; in the case of the valuation banding of properties for council tax, work was contracted out because the Valuation Office Agency's available resources were limited.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all the market tests that have taken place in the Inland Revenue since November 1991; whether the result was the maintenance of in-house provision or whether the service was contracted out; what was the name of the successful contractor where appropriate; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is set out in the following table. In the case of catering and estate management it includes market testing of work done by civil servants in other Departments.

Market testing activity	*Result*	*Name of contractor*
Records management (off-site store at Nottingham)	Contracted out	Rockall Data Services Ltd.
Valuation banding for council tax	Some work contracted out, some retained in-house	Various private sector firms (337 in total)
Bulk mailing (employers' budget pack)	Contracted out	Mailforce Ltd.
Bulk mailing (employers' annual pack)	Contracted out	Mailforce Ltd., Mail Marketing, Character Mailing and Scotmail
Typing, secretarial and office support services (Nottingham)	Contracted out	Blue Arrow Personnel Services Ltd.
Catering (St. Albans)	Contracted out	Sutcliffe Catering
Catering (South Wales group)	Retained in-house (forward)	
Catering (Telford)	Contracted out	Gardner Merchant
Estate management (South Yorkshire and north regions)	Retained in-house (PSA Building Management)	
Estate management (Greater Manchester, North West, Northern Ireland and Telford)	Retained in-house (PSA Building Management)	
Estate management (South East, Wales)	Contracted out	Symonds FM Plc
Estate management (Scotland)	Contracted out	Faithful and Gould
Estate management (West Midlands, East)	Contracted out	W. Torpy and Partners
Estate management (London and headquarters)	Contracted out	Ferguson, Bucknall and Austin)

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff in the Inland Revenue are assigned to the market testing programme; how much the programme has cost the Inland Revenue since November 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: At present 40 staff are assigned to market testing in the Inland Revenue. The estimated cost of the programme since November 1991 is approximately £2·7 million.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the firms of consultants used by the Inland Revenue as part of the market testing programme since November 1991 together with the total cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: The following firms have been used:

Allied Accountancy Services
Coopers and Lybrand
Ernst and Young
Lucidus Ltd.
P-E International
Theordore Goddard
Touche Ross

The total cost of the services of these firms to date is approximately £1·1 million.

Pension Funds

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to protect pension fund surpluses following privatisation.

Mr. Dorrell: The Government will make appropriate arrangements for pension funds in the particular circumstances of individual privatisations.

Bank Notes

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to change the present arrangements for printing bank notes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The printing of Bank of England bank notes is a responsibility of the Bank. There are no present plans to change the existing arrangements.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many landowners nationally have been granted exemption from part of inheritance tax under agreements to allow access to land or other public benefits; and what was the total cost of that concession.

Mr. Dorrell: There have been 126 designations of land for conditional exemption from inheritance tax or capital

transfer tax in England and Wales and 26 designations in Scotland. In addition, there have been 109 designations of historic buildings in England and Wales and 37 designations in Scotland. Some of the designations of historic buildings will have extended to surrounding land. Some designations of historic buildings have been for the purposes of the tax exemptions for maintenance funds rather than for exemption of the buildings themselves.

The annual average cost of inheritance tax conditional exemption for land and buildings is estimated to have been between £5 million and £10 million over the period 1983-84 to 1992-93.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many landowners in north Warwickshire have been granted exemption from portions of inheritance tax under agreements to allow access to land and other public benefits; and what was the total value of that concession.

Mr. Dorrell: Figures are not available on a constituency basis, but, in Warwickshire, fewer than five properties benefited from exemption from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax. The normal rules of taxpayer confidentiality prevent me from giving more precise information.

The national estimates of the cost of conditional exemption represent a broad judgment of the overall cost and are subject to a large margin of error. Where exemption is given, it is not necessary to establish the value of individual properties and it is not possible to estimate the cost of the small number of exemptions in Warwickshire.

EC Tax Laws

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the tax laws in other EC states in force to reduce tax avoidance and evasion as to their applicability to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dorrell: Officers of the Inland Revenue regularly meet their counterparts from other EC states to discuss tax compliance matters.

National Savings

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the fee payment structure for national savings transactions paid to post offices in each of the last three years; and what was the total payment to post offices in the last two years, and projected for the current year.

Mr. Leigh: I have been asked to reply.

The information requested is covered by the Post Offices's contractual arrangements with Sub Postmasters and contractual agreement with the Department for National Savings, and is therefore commercially confidential.

TRANSPORT

Road Building and Management

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many full-time and part-time workers, giving each as a percentage of the total establishment of his Department are employed in matters relating to road building.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: There are 1,298 full-time and two part-time staff employed in directorates of the Department directly concerned with roads construction and highways policy—but excluding the management and maintenance of the motorway and trunk road network—on matters relating to road building. This is 8 per cent. of the Department's total staff of 16,027.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list each major trunk road scheme approved for each of the last five years, together with start date, estimated completion date and actual completion date giving details of how he arrived at *(a)* the justification for the road and *(b)* the environmental impact assessment carried out in each case; and what alternatives to road building were considered by his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Schemes approved, constructed or under construction during the last five years are as listed.

Further information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, once approval has been given and funds are made available, schemes take about 18 months to two years to build on average. An environmental assessment was carried out for each scheme and the justification for each scheme is set out in the decision letter. Since 1988 where appropriate an environmental statement has been published. Copies of these documents are held by the relevant regional offices of the Department of Transport.

(a) Schemes completed 1987-88

A1 Baldersby Grade Separated Junction (GSJ)
A1 Clifton-Stannington
A2 Barham Crossroads GSJ
A2 Rochester Way Relief Road
A6 Chapel-En-Le-Frith Bypass
A10 Buntingford Bypass
A11 Wymondham-Cringleford
A12 Martlesham Bypass
A19 Ricall—Barley Bypass
A20 Sidcup Bypass
A30 Exeter—Okehampton Stage 3
A38 Belvedere Cross—Haldon Hill GSJ
A38 Belvedere Cross GSJ
A38 Hillards Cross GSJ
A39 Bideford Bypass
A43 Towcester Bypass
A43 Brackley Bypass
A47 Peterborough Longthorpe GSJ
A47 Postwick—Blofield Dualling
A47 Wardley Hill Improvement
A48 Chepstow Inn Relief Road
A64 Seamer—Crossgates Bypass
A69 Eighton Lodge Junction Improvement
A303 Furze Hedge GSJ
A406 South Woodford—Barking Relief Road
A422 Stratford North Bypass
A435 Evesham Bypass
A500 Bartholmley Link—M6
A595 Thursby
M63 Stage 3 Widening

Schemes completed 1988-89

A1 Wetherby Bypass
A10 Melbourn Bypass
A17 New Washway Road
A21 Pembury Bypass
A27 Fontwell Bypass
A27 Havant Bypass—Chichester Bypass
A30 Blackwater Bypass
A30 Okehampton Bypass
A34 Hanford Bypass
A34 Whitway Diversion
A35 Bridport Link Road
A35 Dorchester Bypass
A36 Steeple Langford Bypass
A36 Warminster Bypass
A38 Saltash Bypass
A47 Acle Bypass

A49 Prees Bypass
A49 Leominster Bypass
A52 Bottesford Bypass
A65 Settle—Giggleswick Bypass
A69 Horsley—Corbridge Improvement
A303 Thruxton—Amesbury
A303 Ilminster Bypass
A361 North Devon Link Stage 2A
A417 Birdlip Bypass
A419 Blunsdon—Cricklade Improvement
A483 Chester South Bypass—Welsh Border
A616 Stockbridge—M1

A629 Airedale Route Section 1
A650 Airedale Route Section 2
M5 Widening Wardon—Rashwood
M62 West Climbing Lane (W of Junction 25)
M62 East Climbing Lane (Junction 21-22)
M63 Widening (Stage 1-2)

Schemes completed 1989-90
A1 Dishforth Interchange
A3 Compton—Shackleford Improvement
A11 Thetford Bypass
A15 Brigg—Redbourne
A16 South of Haven Bridge Diversion
A17 Cross Keys Bridge Refurbishment
A17 Long Sutton—Sutton Bridge Bypass
A19 Tees Viaduct
A21 Robertsbridge Bypass
A30 Launceston—Plusha Improvements
A36 Beckington Bypass
A39 Barnstaple Bypass
A42 Measham—Ashby Bypass
A46 Coventry East Bypass
A303 Sparkford Bypass
A361 North Devon Link Stage 2B
A435 Sledgeberrow Bypass
A565 Derby Road Improvement
M1 Junction 34 N/S Roundabout Improvements
M25 Widening Junction 11-13
M40 Warwick South
M40 Warwick North
M63 Junction 3-5
M63/M66 Portwood—Denton

Schemes completed 1990-91
A1 South of Brampton Improvement
A1 Newcastle West Bypass
A6 Barton Bypass
A11 Thetford Bypass
A12 Capel St. Mary Junction
A13 Lakeside Junction
A14 (M1-A1) Contract 1
A14 (M1-A1) Contract 7
A14 (M1-A1) Contract 6
A17 Fosdyke Bridge
A19 Peterlee GSJ
A23 Waddon Marsh Bridge
A27 Pevensey Bypass
A35 Charmouth Bypass
A40 Swakeleys Road
A41 Bicester Bypass (Stage 1)
A42 Castle Donington North Contract 1
A43 Peartree Hill—Wendlesbury
A46 Newark Relief Road
A47 East Norton Bypass
A47 Guyhirn Diversion
A52 Nottingham Ring Road (Abbey Street)
A65 Addingham Bypass
A69 Brampton Bypass
A140 Dickleburgh Bypass
A303 Ilchester – South Petherton
A406 Great Cambridge Road Junction
A435 Alcester Bypass
A500 Nantwich Bypass
A696 Woolsington Bypass
A1079 Market Weighton Bypass
M4 Junction 12 Improvement
M5 Catshill—Lydiate Ash
M40 Banbury 2
M40 Banbury 1
M40 Gaydon
M40 Banbury 4
M40 Banbury 3
M40 Waterstock—Wendlebury

Schemes completed 1991-92
A1 Gatenby Lane Junction Improvement
A5 Chirk Bypass
A6 Burton Latimer Bypass
A6 Quorn – Mountsorrel Bypass
A10 Brandon Creek
A11 Red Lodge
A13 Leamouth Interim
A14 M1—A1 Contract 10
A14 M1—A1 Contract 4
A14 M1—A1 Contract 5 South
A16 Louth Bypass
A16 Boston – Algarkirk
A30 Zelah Bypass
A30 Penhale – Carland Cross
A30 Plusha – Bolventor
A31 Picket Post Improvement
A35 Axminster Bypass
A38 Dogshead Lane
A38 Burnaston Development
A41 Whitchurch Bypass
A42 Castle Donington North Contract 3
A42 Castle Donington North Contract 2
A43 Blisworth Bypass
A45/M45 Junction
A47 Eye Bypass
A47 Castor Ailsworth
A59 Mellor Brook
A59 Monk Bridge
A65 Draughton Bypass
A127 Rayleigh Weir GSJ
A134 Fornham St Martin Bypass
A282 Dartford Approach Roads Contract 2
A282 Dartford Approach Roads Contract 1
A303 Stockton West—Chicklade Bypass
A418 Leighton Linslade Bypass
A516 Etwall Bypass
A595 Hensingham Bypass
A650 Drighlington Bypass
A1306 Thurrock Dualling
M3 Compton—Bassett
M4 Junction 12 Improvement
M20 Maidstone—Ashford Contract 2
M20 Maidstone—Ashford Contract 1
M40 Junctions 4—5 Widening

Schemes completed between April 1992—31 January 1993
A1 Bramham—Wetherby Improvements
A3 Milford Bypass
A3 Liphook—Petersfield
A5 Telford—Shrewsbury
A5 Kilsby Diversion
A6 Market Harborough Bypass
A11 Thetford—Bridgham Heath
A13 West India Dock Road Junction (Interim)
A14 M1—A1 Link Road Contract 8
A16 Ludborough Bypass
A16 Stickford Bypass
A27 Brighton and Hove Bypass (Patcham—Coldean)
A38 Marsh Mills Junction Improvement
A38 Bell Bridge—Alrewas
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 4
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 3
A47 East Dereham—North Tuddenham
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 1
A47 Norwich Southern Bypass Contract 2
A49 Weaverham Diversion
A66 Bowes Bypass
A303 Mere—Wincanton
A420 Kingston Bagpuize and Southmoor Bypass
A423 Southam Bypass
A423 Maidenhead Thicket—Burchetts Green

A523 Macclesfield Relief Road
A602 Little Wymondley
M25 Clacket Lane MSA Slip Roads

(b) Schemes under construction at 31 January 1993

A1 Marshall Meadows Improvement
A1 Brownieside Improvement
A5 Little Brickhill
A11 Newmarket—Red Lodge
A11 Four Wentways—Newmarket
A12 Gorleston Relief Road
A14 M1-A1 Link Contracts 2 and 3
A14 M1-A1 Link Road Contract 5 North
A14 M1-A1 Link Road Contract 9
A16 Spalding—Sutterton Bypass
A20 Folkestone—Court Wood (Contract 1)
A20 Folkestone—Dover (Contract 2)
A20 Folkestone—Dover (Contract 3)
A23 Handcross—Pease Pottage
A23 Warninglid—Brighton (Warninglid Flyover—Sayers Common)
A23 Warninglid—Brighton (Muddleswood—Brighton)
A27 Brighton and Hove Bypass (Kingston—Hangleton)
A27 Crossbush Bypass
A27 Westhampnett Bypass
A30 Okehampton—Launceston
A39 Wadebridge Bypass
A40 Long Lane Junction Improvements
A41 Berkhamsted Bypass
A41 Kings Langley Bypass
A41 Wendlebury—Bicester Dualling
A46 Leicester Western Bypass
A59 Greengate—Gutteridge
A339 Basingstoke Northern Bypass (Stage 3)
A406 Hanger Lane/Harrow Road
A568 Widnes Eastern Bypass (North)
A585 Fleetwood Dock Street Diversion
A590 Dalton Bypass
A595 Egremont Bypass
A596 Wigton Bypass
A638 Doncaster North Bridge
A650 Park Road Advance Works
M3 Bar End—Compton
M4 Junctions 10-11 Lighting
M4 Second Severn Main Crossing
M5 Junction 6-8
M20 Junctions 5-8 Widening
M20 Junctions 11-13 Lighting

(c) Schemes for which orders have been made but which are not under construction

A1M Walshford—Dishforth
A5 Fazeley—Two Gates
A11 Besthorpe to Wymondham Improvement
A12 Hackney—M11 Link Road Contract 4
A13 West India Dock Road Junction (Stage 2)
A13 Thames Avenue—Wennington
A13 Wennington—Mar Dyke
A13 West of Heathway—Thames Avenue
A13 Butcher Row Junction Improvement
A17 Wigtoft—Sutterton Bypass
A19 Eastingwold Bypass
A40 Long Lane—West End Road
A40 Gypsy Corner Junction
A40 Western Circus Junction Improvements
A47 Walpole Highway and Tilney High End Bypass
A49 Onibury—Stokesay
A50 Blythe Bridge—Queensway Phase 1
A52 Ashbourne Relief Road
A65 Burley In Wharfedale Bypass
A249 Iwade Bypass
A406 Falloden Way/Finchley High Road
A406 Regents Park Road Junction Improvement
A406 Dysons Road/Hall Lane
A406 East of Silver Street—A1010
A435 Norton—Lenchwick Bypass
A564 Foston, Hatton, Hilton Bypass
M1 Junction 1 Improvement
M1 Junctions 9-10 Northbound
M4/M5 Second Severn Approach Roads
M5 Junction 18 Improvement and Avonmouth Relief Road
M6 Widening Junctions 20-21A (Bridge Renewal)
M6 Widening Junctions 20-21A
M6 Widening Junctions 30-32
M56 Widening Junctions 4-6
M62 Widening and Improvement Junctions 14-17
M66 Denton—Middleton Contact 4

Plutonium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations he has received since 1 March on the transport of plutonium nitrate from Dounreay to Sellafield by sea.

(2) what representations he has received from *(a)* councillors of the Highland regional council and *(b)* others on the recent sea shipment of plutonium nitrate from Dounreay to Sellafield.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

Two letters from one councillor of the Highland regional council, three letters and one inquiry from others and two parliamentary questions.

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of whether the safety standards set out by the International Atomic Energy Authority for how long a flask carrying plutonium should remain unbreached by a fire, is sufficient when compared to the statistics provided by the International Maritime Organisation on the average ship fire.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* The IMO statistics are considered insufficient, taken alone, to determine adequately the risk of such transport. The United Kingdom is therefore actively participating in the joint IAEA/IMO/UNEP working group charged to evaluate the adequacy of the existing provisions and to assess the probabilities of such casualties occurring.

Railway Rolling Stock

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new passenger rail vehicles, including locomotives, rolling stock, and multiple units are scheduled for delivery to the British Railways Board during financial years *(a)* 1993-94, *(b)* 1994-95 and *(c)* 1995-96.

Mr. Freeman: The following passenger rolling stock are currently scheduled for delivery:

	Calendar year			
	1993	*1994*	*1995*	*1996*
Diesel and electric multiple units.	395	188	—	—
Trainset vehicles (power cars, trailer units and coaches) for Channel Tunnel services	200	—	241	—

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many British Railways personnel are employed on the maintenance of locomotives and rolling stock.

Mr. Freeman: A total of 18,753 as at 27 February 1993.

European Time

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the average number of deaths and serious injuries during each week of Greenwich mean time that would be avoided by introducing common European time.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Estimates for 1991 are that some 140 deaths, 520 seriously injured and 2,000 casualties in total could be saved by adopting double British summer time. It is estimated that approximately three quarters of these savings accrue in the 22 weeks during winter when Greenwich mean time is currently in force.

Trust Ports

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimates have been made of the likely proceeds from the first, second and third wave of trust port sales.

Mr. Norris: The total of the sale prices for the five ports privatised last year under the Ports Act 1991 is £380 million. No estimate has been made of the likely proceeds from the sales of any further trust ports.

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the announcement will be made for the next wave of trust ports for privatisation.

Mr. Norris: The powers which the Secretary of State has under the Ports Act 1991 to require trust ports with a turnover above a specified threshold to privatise themselves will become available on 25 July 1993. The Secretary of State has not yet decided which ports he shall consult, under the terms of the Act, concerning their privatisation.

Train Drivers

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many hours were worked per week on average by British Railways Board train drivers during the latest period for which figures are available.

Mr. Freeman: During the week ended 27 February 1993 railway train drivers, excluding those absent through sickness or for other reasons for all or part of the week, worked an average of 47·9 hours.

Concessionary Rail Travel

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many people are currently in receipt of British Railways privilege ticket facilities.

Mr. Freeman: About 600,000 serving, former and retired British Rail staff and their dependants.

Traffic Congestion

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the environmental costs of traffic congestion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: We have no estimate of the environmental costs of traffic congestion. The Standing Advisory Committee on Trunk Road Assessment was asked to investigate methods for the monetary valuation of the environmental effects of road transport in 1989. Its report published in March 1992 recommended, and the Department accepted, that a substantial research programme would be required to develop reliable monetary values. This will clearly take considerable time to complete.

DVLA

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for the three financial years ending with 1991-92, what sums were recovered by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency enforcement staff in Swansea in respect of *(a)* alternative payments and *(b)* recovered licence discs; what sums in penalties were awarded as a result of prosecutions; what were the comparable figures for Post Office Counters Ltd. in 1992-93; and what was the cost of closing the returned cheques operation in Swansea.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: The sums recovered by Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency enforcement staff in respect of dishonoured vehicle excise duty cheques in each of the last three financial years were as follows:

	1989-90 £	*1990-91* £	*1991-92* £
Alternative Payments (for example, cash banker's draft)	5,227,829	6,550,755	7,279,615
Recovered licence discs	1,346,129	1,760,073	2,015,949
Amounts awarded in fines and penalties as a result of prosecutions over the same period were	1,192,645	1,798,426	2,616,925

The sums recovered by Post Office Counters Ltd. between April 1992 and January 1993 were:

	£
Alternative payments	4,529,707
Recovered licence discs	645,379

Note: DVLA remain responsible for prosecution work.

These figures cannot be used to compare performance levels since POCL took on the work on a phased basis from April 1992. Details of the financial contract between DVLA and POCL are commercially sensitive.

Lorries, London

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information is available to him of the total costs and the total number of rejected applications of the London lorry ban exemption scheme.

Mr. Norris: The London lorry ban is the responsibility of the London boroughs transport scheme. It applies only to local roads. The information requested is not readily available to my Department.

Rail Freight

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what date he has set for the completion of the upgrading process of British Rail's existing freight loading gauge to the SB1 loading gauge.

Mr. Freeman: This is an operational matter for British Rail. I understand that BR has set itself the objective of completing the upgrading in time for the opening of the channel tunnel.

Waterloo Station

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to facilitate transfer of people with mobility handicaps between Waterloo and Waterloo East stations.

Mr. Freeman: British Rail has provided a high-level pedestrian bridge over the road between the two stations. Access to the bridge from Waterloo station is by stairs and escalators. There is also a customer-operated lift for people with mobility handicaps. From the bridge to the platforms in Waterloo East all routes are either level or ramped.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Donald Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the quality of performance of Post Office Counters Ltd. in respect of the contract on dishonoured cheques in payment of vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: During negotiations toward the current contract for vehicle relicensing, Post Office Counters Ltd. offered to take over responsibility for following up dishonoured cheques made payable to it. This work had previously been carried out by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency but the POCL price was significantly lower. The contract provides for financial penalties to be payable by POCL from 1 January 1993 for any failure to meet performance levels previously achieved by DVLA's staff.

Rail Travel (Cyclists)

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what facilities will be available to cyclists on railways after rail privatisation; and what encouragement will be given to private operators to facilitate the travel of cyclists, both at stations and on trains.

Mr. Freeman: Provision for cyclists following privatisation will be a matter for railway operators, as it is now for British Rail. We believe private sector operators will wish to seize the opportunity to provide a better service and improved facilities, in order to attract more passengers, including cyclists, to the railway.

New Drivers

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to *(a)* introducing restrictions on the power of cars which newly qualified drivers can drive and *(b)* compulsory motorway driving training and testing either as part of, or post, L tests; and what measures he proposes to tighten the requirements of driver testing.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: My right hon. Friend is considering various options for reducing the high accident rate associated with newly qualified drivers. We hope to issue a consultation paper shortly.

Twyford Down

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *699*, on how many people papers were served by Brays detective agency in connection with Twyford Down.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Brays Detective Agency (Southampton) Ltd. has served papers on three people in respect of trespass on the Department's land at Twyford Down.

Marine Pollution

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many incidents of discharges of noxious substances controlled under the MARPOL regulations in United Kingdom coastal waters occurred in the latest year for which figures are available; and how many prosecutions have been brought relating to discharges of noxious substances from ships in United Kingdom coastal waters in violation of the MARPOL regulations.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 9 March 1993]*: In 1991, the latest year for which details are available, there were 195 reported discharges from ships into United Kingdom waters, which resulted in two successful prosecutions being brought. This excludes prosecutions brought by members of the now defunct British Ports Federation for which no figures are available.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Protection of Trading Interests Act

Mr. Batiste: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what criteria are used for assessing the desirability of making statutory instruments under the Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980; and if he will list all such statutory instruments which have been made.

Mr. Needham: In general, successive Governments have sought to minimise potential conflicts with our trading partners by seeking to resolve issues through discussion and consultation; they have, however, been prepared to use the powers under the Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980 when doing so appeared to be the best way to protect the trading interests of the United Kingdom in particular cases. Since the Act was passed in 1980, the Secretary of State has made statutory instruments in only four cases:

(i) On 30 June 1982, a section 1(1) Order (S.I. 1982 No. 885) was applied to the United States West Siberian pipeline re-export controls.

(ii) On 23 June 1983 a section 1(1) Order (S.I. 1983 No. 900) was applied to sections 1 and 2 of the United States Sherman Act and sections 4 and 4A of the United States Clayton Act in cases where United Kingdom airlines designated under the Bermuda 2 agreement concerning air services are parties to agreements, or other acts, concerning tariffs or which otherwise relate to the operation of an air service authorised under the Bermuda 2 agreement.

(iii) On 23 March 1988, a section 5(4) Order (S.I. 1988 No. 569) was made applying section 5(2)(b) of the Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980 to section 81(1A) of the Trade Practices Act 1974 of Australia, making unenforceable in the United Kingdom an overseas judgment under the Australian Act ordering divestment of assets acquired in contravention of that Act's merger control provisions.

(iv) On 14 October 1992 a section 1(1) Order (S.I. 1992 No. 2449) was applied to those provisions of part 515 (entitled Cuban Assets Control Regulations) of title 31 of the Code of Federal Regulations which affect trading activities carried on in the United Kingdom or the import of goods to or the export of goods from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Batiste: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions the Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980 has been invoked; against whom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The Secretary of State has made the following orders and directions under the Protection of Trading Interests Act 1980:

On 3 March 1981, a section 2 direction was issued to a United Kingdom company to prohibit compliance with a demand by the United States Commodity Futures Trading Commission to provide it with commercial information located outside the United States.

On 30 June 1982, a section 1(1) order, (S.I. 1982 No. 885), was applied to the United States West Siberian pipeline re-export controls. Such an order brings into operation the Secretary of State's powers under sections 1(2), 1(3), and 2 of the PTIA.

On 2 August 1982, section 1(3) directions were issued to AFF Ltd., Baker Oil Tools (United Kingdom) Ltd., John Brown Engineering Ltd., and Smith International (North Sea) Ltd., to prohibit compliance with the United States West Siberian pipeline re-export controls.

On 10 September 1982, section 1(3) directions were issued to Andrew Corporation and the Walter Kidde Company Ltd., to prohibit compliance with the United States West Siberian pipeline re-export controls.

On 2 November 1982, a section 1(3) direction was issued to Seaco Sales and Service (North Sea) Ltd. to prohibit compliance with the United States West Siberian pipeline re-export controls.

On 23 June 1983, a section 1(1) order (S.I. 1983 No. 900) was applied to sections 1 and 2 of the United States Sherman Act and sections 4 and 4A of the United States Clayton Act in cases where United Kingdom airlines designated under the Bermuda 2 agreement concerning air services are parties to agreements, or other acts, concerning tariffs or which otherwise relate to the operation of an air service authorised under the Bermuda 2 agreement.

On 23 June 1983, a section 1(3) general direction was issued prohibiting any person in the United Kingdom carrying on business from complying with the United States anti-trust measures in relation to the cases described in the section 1(1) order of 23 June 1983.

On 23 June 1983, a section 2 general direction was issued prohibiting any person in the United Kingdom from complying with any requirement from the United States Department of Justice or the grand jury to produce commercial documents located in the United Kingdom or any information concerning possible violations of sections 1 and 2 of the Sherman Act by United Kingdom-designated airlines. The direction also applied to any requirement from the United States district court of Columbia concerning similar matters, which were subject to civil anti-trust proceedings.

On 1 July 1983, a further section 2 general direction was made to clarify the scope of the section 2 general direction issued on 23 June 1983.

On 16 July 1984, a general direction under section 2 was issued prohibiting any person in the United Kingdom from complying with any requirement from the United States district court of Columbia to produce commercial documents in the United Kingdom, or any commercial information in respect of further United States civil anti-trust proceedings against United Kingdom-designated airlines.

On 20 March 1986, general directions under section 2 were issued prohibiting any person in the United Kingdom from complying with any requirement from the United States district court of Columbia and the district court for the central district of California to produce commercial documents in the United Kingdom, or any commercial information in respect of further United States civil anti-trust proceedings against United Kingdom designated airlines.

On 23 March 1988, a section 5(4) order (S.I. 1988 No. 569) was made applying section 5(2)(b) of the PTIA to section 81(1A) of the Trade Practices Act 1974 of Australia, making unenforceable in the United Kingdom an overseas judgment under the Australian Act ordering divestment of assets acquired in contravention of that Act's merger control provisions.

On 12 July 1991, a section 2 direction was issued to a company to prohibit compliance with a court order made by a court in the United States of America.

On 14 October 1992, a section 1(1) order (S.I. 1992 No. 2449) was applied to those provisions of part 515 (entitled Cuban Assets Control Regulations) of title 31 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations which affect trading activities carried on in the United Kingdom or the import of goods to or the export of goods from the United Kingdom.

On 14 October 1992, a general direction under section 1(3) was issued prohibiting any persons in the United Kingdom from complying, except with the consent of the Secretary of State, with the prohibitions imposed by the Cuban Assets Control Regulations cited in the section 1(1) order of 14 March 1992.

Illegal Practices Investigations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by year for the last five years the cost of his Department's investigations into alleged illegal trade practices that have resulted in the allegations not being proved; and if he will show the cost by type of investigation carried out.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Telecommunications Act 1984

Mr. Cousins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the various target investment limits on Government voting rights imposed under section 65 of the Telecommunications Act 1984; and whether any further changes are under review.

Mr. Leigh: Under the terms of the Telecommunications Act 1984 (Government Shareholding) Order 1992, (Statutory Instrument number 631 of 1992), the target investment limit for the Government shareholding in British Telecommunications plc is set at 22·209 per cent. of the voting rights exercisable in all circumstances at general meetings of the company. This replaces the earlier limit, set

out in the Telecommunications Act 1984 (Government Shareholding) Order 1985, of 49·803 per cent. of such voting rights. The Government plan to sell a part of their remaining shareholding in BT in 1993-94. They may wish to further revise the target investment limit again in the light of any sale of shares which takes place.

Coal Imports

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the level of coal imports in tonnes to South Wales ports in each year since 1987; what estimates he has made of the annual tonnage of coal imports into these ports until 1997; and what assessment he has made of the future markets for this imported coal.

Mr. Eggar: The amounts of coal imported to South Wales ports since 1987 were:

Year	*Thousand tonnes*
1987	2,184
1988	2,499
1989	3,111
1990	3,587
1991	3,680
1992[1]	3,275

[1] Provisional
Source: HM Customs and Excise

We do not make estimates of future imports of coal.

Joint Ventures

Mr. Butterfill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the EC's revised rules for vetting joint ventures and the effects of a warning letter on ongoing joint venture discussions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The United Kingdom was consulted during the drawing up of the EC Commission's notice concerning the assessment of co-operative joint ventures under article 85 of the EC treaty. We welcome the Commission's commitment to improving its procedures and speeding up the handling of article 85 cases. It is too early to assess the effects of the new procedures, but we hope they will benefit companies by clarifying the criteria against which joint ventures will be assessed and offering earlier guidance on their compatibility with the EC competition rules.

Post Office Pension Fund

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last met the trustees of the Post Office pension fund; and what plans he has for a further meeting.

Mr. Leigh: My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has had no meeting with the trustees of either the Post Office's pension schemes, the Post Office staff superannuation scheme and the Post Office pension scheme, and he has no present plans for such a meeting.

Post Office Services

Mr. Stephen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether he will bring forward proposals to make the services of post offices available to their customers on Saturday afternoons.

Mr. Leigh: Opening hours of post offices are an operational matter for the Post Office.

Electricity

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to encourage the regional electricity companies to continue to purchase electricity sources from renewables after 1998.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him of 2 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns 106-07.

Cycles

Mr. Simpson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has made to the European Commission concerning the volume of cycles or cycle parts now imported into the Community; what replies he has received; and if he will place those representations and responses in the Library.

Mr. Needham: I refer the hon. Member to the first of the two answers on this subject which I gave on 16 February to the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) *Official Report*, column *126*.

Connah's Quay Power Station

Mr. Alton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade further to his answer to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West, (Mr. Morgan) on 9 March, what assessment he has made of the effect of a delay in taking a decision on the proposed Connah's Quay gas-fired power station on the development of the gas fields off the north Wales coast and in Liverpool bay.

Mr. Eggar: In my answer of 9 March to the hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) at column *502*, I assured him that all relevant factors were being carefully considered. The question posed by the hon. Member is one such factor.

Business Failures

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many businesses ceased trading in *(a)* Pendle and *(b)* the north-west in each year since 1987.

Mr. Sainsbury: The best available guide to trends in business starts and closures comes from VAT data. The number of businesses registered and deregistered for VAT in Pendle and the north-west in each year since 1987 is given in the table:

Registrations and deregistrations: 1987-1991

	Pendle		*North West*	
	Registration	*Deregistrations*	*Registrations*	*Deregistrations*
1987	218	209	18,916	17,852
1988	309	219	21,757	17,797
1989	308	265	24,159	17,797

	Pendle		North West	
	Registration	Deregistrations	Registrations	Deregistrations
1990	321	244	24,012	17,917
1991	269	285	21,028	19,533

BCCI

Mr. Vaz: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many properties have been disposed of by the liquidation of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International at less than the market value; what was the sum raised; and what steps are being taken to advertise the individual values achieved.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Realisation of the assets of any company in liquidation is a matter for the liquidators, whose duty it is to achieve the best possible outcome for the creditors.

Credit Marketing

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he proposes to make regulations to implement the proposals contained in his Department's consultation document on revised proposals for legislation on credit marketing; how those proposals have been amended in the light of his Department's consultation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 11 March 1993]:* The proposals for legislation on credit marketing are being reconsidered. A statement will be made when that reconsideration has been completed.

Consumer Credit Act 1974

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to seek to amend the Consumer Credit Act 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Leigh *[holding answer 11 March 1993]:* In December my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms asked the Director General of Fair Trading to review consumer credit legislation and the proposals for amending it. The proposals will be reconsidered in the light of the Director General's advice.

Assisted Area Status

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those local authorities which have made representations seeking assisted area status.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 9 March 1993]:* It is my intention to issue a complete list of those individuals and organisations which have put forward views under the consultation arrangements, when the announcement of the new assisted areas map is made. The only exceptions will be any views put forward to us in confidence.

Defence Retraining

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to support a European defence retraining and readaption programme to fund retraining programmes for redundant defence industry workers and provide readaption aid for affected parts of the community.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 8 March 1993]:* At the initiative of the European Parliament 130 mecu was entered into the EC budget for 1993 for a programme of assistance to defence-dependent areas to be called KONVER. We are currently awaiting the Commission's proposals for implementing this programme.

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SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

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The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

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